Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:
On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the least and 5 the most, how safe and secure do you feel these days inside your home?

Let your voice be heard! Go to www.saipantribune.com to cast your vote.

60 DAYS without a government budget for FY 2009

INSIDE

Rescue Mission
Indian commandos dropped from helicopters onto the roof of a Jewish center in Mumbai where militants were holed up.

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Good Job
From one Bond to another: job well done.

LIFE & STYLE...Page 21

Pangelinan: Critical agencies face no budget cuts. **PAGE 2**
NMI joins Asia's largest travel mart in China. **PAGE 5**

Zoning: Adult biz not complying

NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ
One of the clubs at the Paseo de Marianas.

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
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REPORTER

The Commonwealth Zoning Office will soon be issuing notices of violations to so-called adult businesses that continue to ignore a law that has been in effect since early this year.

Zoning Administrator W. Steve Tilley said a lot of these businesses have not been complying with the new Saipan Zoning Law and could be liable for criminal and civil penalties.

Tilley

Violators of the law may be fined $1,000 per day of violation.

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Study: Outside aid needed for NMI to recover

SAIPAN TRIBUNE
This file pictures shows a boy selling bananas at the Sabalu Market. With the federalization of the CNMI's immigration system, the government claims this will impact the economy of the islands and sees the need for federal relief to offset the negative effect of the new law.

ECONOMY

By KRISTI EATON
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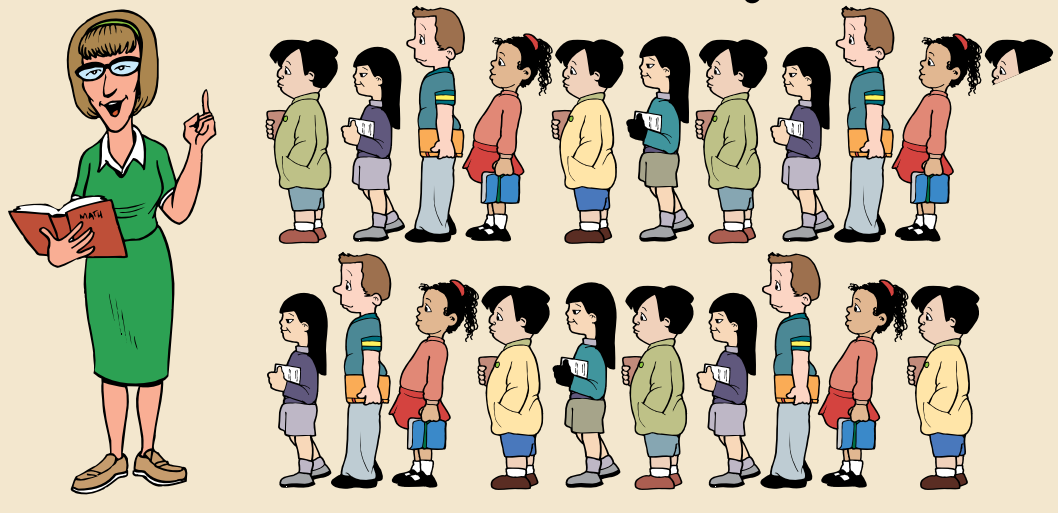
REPORTER

The Fitial administration agrees with most of the economic recovery recommendations listed in the recently released economic report that evaluates the impact of federal laws on the CNMI, particularly the need for outside help to enable the local economy to recover.

The report listed eight recommenda-

See STUDY on Page 4

One teacher for every 20.2 students in the CNMI



By KRISTI EATON
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REPORTER

A new report shows that the CNMI Public School System had one of the highest students-to-teacher ratios during the 2006-2007 school year.

The report, released this month by the National Center for Education Statistics, showed PSS had a total student population of 11,695 and 579 teachers, for a ratio of 20.2 students for every teacher.

The average among the 50 states, five U.S. territories and the Department of Defense dependents schools was 15.5 students for every teacher. The Guam Public School System did not submit numbers. California (20.9), Oregon (21.3) and Utah (22.1) had higher student to teacher ratios than the CNMI, while Arizona had the same ratio. Vermont had the lowest ratio at 10.8.

The report also broke down the student-to-teacher ratios by kindergarten, elementary and

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Dear readers, advertisers and vendors of the *Saipan Tribune*,

Since August 2002, the *Saipan Tribune* has been proud to say that we are still the first and only media organization in the Northern Marianas that provides local news to our community seven days a week. Members of the *Tribune* team have been working every day to produce your community newspaper and keep you informed and entertained.

However, in today's economic storm, even the strongest of businesses—and yes, even a healthy company like the *Saipan Tribune*—are impacted by the shrinking of the pie. Therefore, every business, large and small, every government entity, and even every family should take a look at efficiency and what it will take to survive the bottoming out of the economy.

As one of our own cost-cutting measures, effective November 30, we will temporarily suspend the Sunday newspaper until economic conditions in the CNMI improve. We sincerely hope this will be soon.

Although we will miss our Sunday comics and other features, we feel that the temporary reduction in the newspaper schedule from seven days to six only makes sense at this time. You have our assurance that if there's a breaking story over the weekend that is of importance to the community, *Tribune* staff will continue to be there and you can read about it in our popular online edition at **"http://www.saipantribune.com."**

On behalf of *Saipan Tribune*, thank you to all of our readers, vendors and advertisers. You have our commitment to continue to serve you as we weather this economic storm together.

Lynn Knight
Publisher
Saipan Tribune

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 26, 2008
Study: A return to 1985 economy under federalization
China dim

Local

'Critical agencies face no budget cuts'

By AGNES E. DONATO
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REPORTER

Critical public services will be exempted from the 10.7-percent across the board budget cut now being considered by lawmakers to eliminate the government's $9-million projected shortfall in the current fiscal year.

Sen. Maria Frica Pangelinan, chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Fiscal Affairs, said the reduction will not apply to the Department of Public Health, Department of Public Safety, Department of Corrections, Public School System, and Northern Marianas College.

The 10.7-percent cut came after concerns were raised about the previous budget version, which proposed to appropriate $9.1 million more than expected revenues and leave the governor to decide where to make the cuts.

Pangelinan indicated yesterday that the Senate is ready to approve the proposal, which will result in a balanced budget. At press time, the House of Representatives reportedly was meeting to discuss whether to accept the proposed cut, make additional exemptions, or make further reductions against some departments in order to give more to others.

"At least the House finally recognizes that the Legislature must make the cut rather than have a provision for the Governor to make the cut. I believe they are meeting right now and will be letting the Senate know of their final decision," said Pangelinan.

She added, "What I eventually hope to see is to allow each department head to make the decision where to cut costs to meet their budget shortfall without sacrificing public services. Regardless of how one shifts the numbers, one cannot avoid the fact that the shortfall must be addressed and at best be proportionately shared by each agency."

The government expects to collect $169.55 million in revenue from Oct. 1, 2008, to Sept. 30, 2009. Of this amount, $12.85 million will go to debt service and other pre-existing obligations, leaving $156.7 million available for government operations.

Lawmakers propose to augment this with $3.5 million from several sources outside the general fund, and $5.17 million in "Compact Impact" funds, which is federal government's reimbursement to the Northern Marianas for the cost of hosting citizens from Micronesia. These additional funds bring to $165.37 million the amount available for government operations in the 2009 fiscal year.

If approved, the last budget bill would have provided for a total of $174.47 million in expenditures, about $9.1 million more than the available funds. It also proposed to reject the governor's proposals for balancing the budget, including a reduced retirement contribution rate, a no-work-no-pay policy on legal holidays, and a biweekly shutdown of government offices. Instead of proposing cuts to balance the budget, it set out statutory provisions that the governor could use to keep costs down.

Bill lowers foreign retiree age to 35

By AGNES E. DONATO
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REPORTER

A legislative committee has recommended passage of a bill reducing from 55 years to 35 years the minimum age requirement for foreigners seeking to live in the Commonwealth as retirees.

The bill also increases the required minimum investment to $125,000 for a qualifying property on Saipan and $100,000 on Rota or Tinian. Further, it provides an alternative scheme by which a foreign can qualify for the foreign retiree investment certificate. Under the bill, an alien can stay in the CNMI as a foreign retiree by simply investing $1,500 in monthly lease or rent.

Currently, to qualify for a foreign retiree permit, an alien has to be over 55 years old and invest $100,000 in a residential property on Saipan, or $75,000 on Tinian or Rota.

According to the bill, there are other affluent foreigners in Japan and other nearby Asian countries who want to retire or invest in a second home in the Commonwealth, but who do not qualify under current rules. Sponsored by Rep. Stanley Torres, the bill intends to accommodate them.

"[A]llowing foreigners to maintain a residence in the CNMI would generate much needed revenue, especially now during our ailing economy. Foreigners, and their extended families who could be expected to visit, would bring into the Commonwealth much needed foreign capital," states the bill.

The bill also proposes to allow a holder of a foreign retiree investment certificate to stay in the CNMI for five-year periods. It sets out requirements such as health insurance and other coverage for the medical needs of foreign retirees and their dependents. Gov. Benigno R. Fitial, in signing the existing foreign retiree legislation in 2006, stated the benefits of a developing a foreign retiree community in the Commonwealth: "The CNMI... will benefit economically, socially and culturally. Not only will foreign retirees invest in real property, but also purchase goods and services from our businesses, while enjoying a quiet and peaceful retirement here in the CNMI and sharing their culture with our children and us."

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PRO SE

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

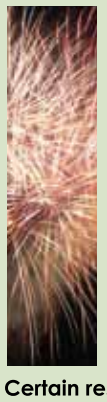
IN THE MATTER OF THE ADOPTION OF L. T. W. O., minor child,	CIVIL ACTION NO. 08-0663
By: JOSE K. OLOPAI and LOURDES W. OLOPAI, Petitioner(s).	NOTICE OF HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on December 5, 2008 at 1:30 p.m. in Courtroom 205 A, before the Associate Judge Kenneth L. Govendo.

Dated this 13th day of November, 2008.

/s/ Bernadita A. Sablan
Clerk of Court

Tour package includes:



- Roundtrip economy ticket Saipan-Shanghai-Saipan
- 5-Star Hotel accommodations
- City tour: Yuhuan Garden, Jade Buddha Monastery, Oriental Pearl TV Tower, Chenghuang Market
- Roundtrip airport/hotel transfers
- Daily breakfast and one lunch
- Aircondition bus, entrance tickets, tour insurance, English speaking tour guide

Deadline: December 5, 2008

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'Schools must make up missed days'

By KRISTI EATON
kristi_eaton@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Marianas High School will need to make up the four days that have been cancelled so far this school year.

"Those four days are sacred," said Rita Sablan, the Public School System's Education Commissioner.

Earlier this month, classes were cancelled for two days as police were investigating the murder of security guard Efren L. Ballesteros. In September, Gov. Benigno Fitial signed a state of disaster emergency for four schools—MHS, Kagman Elementary School, Koblerville Elementary School, and Oleai Head Start—because water quality tests results had not come back in time. Each of the schools was closed for two days.

Schools are required to provide 180 days of instruction, and with those absent days the schools will not meet that requirement, Sablan said, adding that principals and teachers are aware they need to be made up.

In October, Sablan disclosed to the Board of Education that delaying the start date for the four schools cost the system more than $13,000.

Fitial had asked the Department of Public Health to form a task force to check the preparedness of the schools in light of the island's blackouts at the time. DEQ tested the water at all schools, but tests for the four schools were not back in time for the Sept. 8 opening.

Fitial informed Sablan and the Board of Education about his executive decision to postpone the opening on the night of Sept. 7.

Because the school district was not informed about Fitial's decision until the night before, food vendors continued to prepare meals, Sablan said. Vendors must be given 24 hours notice in order to cease preparation. The meals cost the district more than $6,000

PSS also had to pay personnel $7,000 for the work they performed during the two days they were preparing for the water tests, Sablan said. Personnel worked on Sept. 6 and 7, a Saturday and Sunday, trying to prepare the schools for the tests.

DPL Rota chief named to licensing board

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial has appointed the Department of Public Lands' lead official on Rota to represent the island to the Board of Professional Licensing.

Teresita Santos, who currently serves as DPL resident director for Rota, was nominated to replace Valerie M. Atalig in the licensing board.

"The lt. governor and I are confident that Ms. Santos is qualified and will be an asset on this important board," the governor said in a letter to Senate President Pete P. Reyes.

Santos' appointment requires Senate confirmation. If confirmed, she will serve Atalig's unexpired term, which ends on Sept. 22, 2010.

The Board of Professional Licensing is responsible for enforcing professional standards in the Commonweatlh. It licenses practitioners of various fields, including architecture, engineering, real estate appraisal, and others. The board has five members. Currently, the sitting members are Francisco Q. Guerrero, Roman S. Demapan, Mitchell K Aaron, all from Saipan, and Gregorio Castro from Tinian. ***(Agnes E. Donato)***

Masseuse sues ex-employers to collect Labor award

A masseuse has filed a lawsuit against her former employers for allegedly refusing to pay her unpaid wages and liquidated damages despite an administrative order issued by the Department of Labor.

Yan Zhen Wang sued the American Sai Green Corp., which owns Asahi Health Massage, and its owners Yan Sun, Jian Dong, and Chang Guang Li.

Wang, through counsel S. Joshua Berger, asked the Superior Court to order the defendants to pay her $7,759.20 in damages plus pre-judgment interest, and court costs.

Wang was employed with Asahi Health Massage as a masseuse.

Berger said that on June 25, 2008, Labor issued an administrative order finding the defendants liable to pay Wang $7,759.20 in unpaid wages and liquidated damage.

"Defendants have not paid any of the amount owed to plaintiff. Defendants are presently in default…in the amount of $7,759.20," the lawyer said. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

BEFORE THE COMMONWEALTH PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION'S RATE STRUCTURE AND RELATED MATTERS **DOCKET 09-1**

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

On October 7, 2008, the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission [CPUC] commenced, on its own initiative pursuant to 4 CMC § 8409[b], an investigation of the Commonwealth Utilities Commission's [CUC] electric rate structure. Public Law 16-2:3 requires that this investigation be conducted on or before December 31, 2008. At CPUC's direction, its regulatory consultant [Georgetown] has undertaken a review of CUC's financial condition, operations and rate structure. Georgetown has also been tasked with recommending a CPUC protocol for regulating CUC's procurements and capital divestitures. On November 24, 2008, Georgetown issued a report on the results of this review. CUC has been given the opportunity, on or before December 8, 2008, to respond to the Georgetown report. These reports, when filed with CPUC, will be available for public inspection at the Law Offices of Viola Alepuyo, 2nd Floor, J.E. Tenorio Bldg, Gualo Rai, Saipan, MP 96950. This docket begins an incremental regulatory process by which CPUC will first determine and then provide the just and reasonable rate support, which is necessary to enable CUC to provide reliable electric service.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that CPUC will conduct a public hearing, which will commence at 6:00 p.m. on December 12, 2008 at the Senate chamber in the Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Building on Capitol Hill to receive Georgetown's report and CUC's position regarding the report. CPUC will deliberate on its hearing examiner's report of the investigation and hearing at a business meeting, which will be conducted at 6:00 p.m. on December 19, 2008 at the Saipan Chamber of Commerce Conference Room. The hearing examiner's report, which will be filed on December 16, 2008, will also be available for public inspection at the Law Offices of Viola Alepuyo, 2nd Floor, J.E. Tenorio Building, Gualo Rai, Saipan, CNMI 96950.

CPUC welcomes the public's attendance at the hearing and will welcome public comments at the conclusion of the hearing, which will be entertained in the order registered with CPUC staff prior to the commencement of the hearing. Persons who desire to participate in the hearing pursuant to 4 CMC § 8409(j) should on or before December 8, 2008 file with CPUC at the Law Offices of Viola Alepuyo, 2nd Floor, J.E. Tenorio Bld, Gualo Rai, Saipan, MP 96950 an application and offer of proof in accordance with § 8409(j) and CPUC Procedural Rule 11(c).

Further information about the hearing and the public's right to participate must be made in writing and addressed to the CPUC and dropped off or mailed to Law Offices of Viola Alepuyo, 2nd Floor, J.E. Tenorio Bld, Gualo Rai, P.O. Box 5506 CHRB, Saipan, MP 96950.

Fitial awaits AGO's move in Fund's lawsuit

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial said it is up to the Attorney General's Office to make the next move with respect to the Superior Court's decision that found the CNMI government and him liable in the lawsuit filed by the Retirement Fund over the government's failure to remit the required employer contributions.

"I don't tell them what to do. They are the legal experts. I rely on their expert advice," said Fitial in an interview with *Saipan Tribune*.

The governor said the court should look at the merits of the case "instead of the personalities."

The decision was a default judgment because the court said the AGO took too long to answer the lawsuit. When asked to comments on this, Fitial replied: "When you commit a sin, you go to confession and you get forgiveness."

Associate Judge Kenneth Govendo recently granted the Fund's request for default judgment after the AGO, as counsel for Fitial and the government, waited nearly two years to answer the lawsuit.

Govendo found no adequate reason for the delay and ordered Fitial's and the government's answer to the complaint be stricken from the record.

The judge said the matter represents an issue of vital importance that will have far reaching consequences for every family in the Commonwealth.

"For the Commonwealth to say that it was unable to answer a lawsuit potentially worth upwards of $91 million due to the 'press of other business' is both absurd and reprehensible," Govendo said.

He said the sole issue remaining to be determined is the amount of damages owed the Fund.

At the hearing, when asked to explain the delay in answering the complaint, assistant attorney general Anthony Welch reportedly replied: "I messed up. It was me. If you need to sanction someone it should be me. It was my fault."

The Fund filed the lawsuit against the government, Fitial, Department of Finance, and Finance Secretary Eloy Inos in 2006 over the government's failure to remit required payments, now reportedly reaching over $119.6 million.

Virtual Pacific environmental libraries formed

The Information Resource Centre & Library of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme has completed compilation of online virtual environment libraries for all Pacific island countries and territories.

Accessible from the SPREP IRC & Library homepage (http://www.sprep.org/publication/pub_top.asp), virtual environment libraries have been created for American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna.

The online resources include deep links to environment profiles and indicators, full text country reports, linkages to reports published by SPREP and the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, and links to documents hosted on Moana, Pacific Reefbase and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community Digital Library. The libraries also include access to academic literature and research, multimedia materials and an inventory of environment related websites for each country.

Peter Murgatroyd, the SPREP Information Resource Centre Manager and coordinator of the Pacific Environment Information Network (PEIN) launched the new online libraries.

"The importance of access to environmental data and current knowledge and best practices in environmental management must be stressed, especially in the face of rapid environmental change and resource depletion in the region. Community access to information is critical to enhance environmental governance at both the national and local level."

The PEIN virtual environment libraries were developed by the SPREP IRC & Library with funding assistance from the European Union. ***(PR)***

STUDY

From Page 1

tions for the Commonwealth to achieve economic recovery:

1. Repeal the statute extending the U.S. immigration laws to the CNMI.
2. Provide emergency financial assistance to respond to the economic crisis in the CNMI.
3. Produce better data in order to paint a better picture of what is happening in the CNMI economy.
4. Amend the statute extending the U.S. minimum wage to the CNMI.
5. Provide effective representation in the U.S. Executive branch.
6. Create a stronger partnership between the private and public sectors.
7. Seek federal assistance to small investors.
8. Consider amending the Covenant.

Press secretary Charles Reyes Jr. said the administration supports majority of the recommendations.

"Maybe there's a controversial portion about renegotiating the Covenant," he said. "I don't know if we're going to take on that recommendation."

When asked if the administration disagrees with that recommendation, Reyes said he has not discussed it with the governor, and there needs to be further discussion before he says the administration agrees or disagrees.

Reyes said the CNMI could experience relief without renegotiating the Covenant, because the relief needs to come at the U.S. congressional level.

The Covenant doesn't need to be renegotiated in order to have access to the necessary labor and visitor markets, he said, noting that the administration has grave concerns about the preliminary regulations restricting Russian and Chinese tourists from the visa waiver program.

The administration is open to most of the other recommendations, including seeking federal financial aid, Reyes said.

"After all, we're in a very tough situation and, arguably, much of this stress will be caused by federal policies if they are not corrected," he said.

According to the report's recommendation, the CNMI will not be able to recover without outside help.

"U.S. aid will be required to: maintain an adequate level of public facilities and services; business and housing loans; and economic recovery and development assistance. The CNMI, with a growing economic depression and declining local revenues, does not get a reasonable share of federal expenditures per capita," the report states. "Furthermore, it is ineligible for some of the most important programs, including unemployment compensation. In fact, the CNMI was not even included in the U.S. trade adjustment assistance laws to assist companies and workers adversely affected by imports to the U.S. The CNMI does not have any real form of economic safety net at this time of economic disaster the seriousness of which few areas of the country ever experience."

In the past the CNMI had been very successful in raising revenue locally through private sector development, so it depended less per capita on federal revenues than any other U.S. territory, according to the report. The U.S. average federal expenditure per capita was $8,058 in 2006, almost four times that of the CNMI's per capita federal expenditures of $2,145, the report says.

Although the garment industry would have eventually opted out of the CNMI, Reyes said the minimum wage increase damaged the economy and accelerated the industry's demise.

The minimum wage increase required further analysis, which unfortunately, the report states, "was not done prior to passage of the legislation."

Under current law, the minimum wage will increase in 50-cent increments a year until it reaches the federal rate of $7.25 per hour in 2015.

According to the report, possibilities that could be done to modify the statute include: lengthening the period over which the U.S. minimum wage is increased; base increases on some objective standard related to work productivity or establishing an improved special program for increasing the minimum wage.

"The CNMI could have made a stronger case for more appropriate application of the U.S. minimum wage and immigration systems if better local data had been available," the report states on the recommendation of data requirements.

With better data, the U.S. Department of Labor and the Government Accountability Office could have produced more helpful information.

"It could have been used to demonstrate what was happening to the CNMI economy and to forecast what was likely to happen if those systems were applied in the way they were. The most important requirements are to gather selected information on key economic parameters in as timely a manner as possible and then build a data base as far back as possible for each data series," the report says.

A few of the key data sets would be: population, employment, wages and salaries, and a few others at some minimal level of industry classification. "The federal government does this and more for the states and some other territories, so they should be persuaded to do it for the CNMI," it says.

The report does state, however, that a lack of economic data hindered the Government Accountability Office and U.S. Department of Labor from the ability to produce a thorough study.

"Building the requisite data base for an analysis of the CNMI economy is challenging but not impossible. The principal task is reconciling information from disparate sources," the report states.

For example, the study's authors, Malcolm D. McPhee & Associates and Dick Conway, used five data sources to estimate employment: the economic census; W-2 reports; census population and housing; the household, income and expenditure survey; and other industry and government tabulations. The study also used the CNMI income and product accounts and the quarterly Economic Indictor report.

Lengthening the timeframe of the minimum wage increase would help limit the suffering of local businesses, Saipan Chamber of Commerce president Jim Arenovski said.

As businesses look at the economy and see revenue decreasing, the yearly wage increase will continue to strain businesses, large and small, he said. A temporary stay or re-evaluation would allow a better understanding of the changes currently taking place.

And it's not just about the federalization bill, Arenovski added.

"Everybody here, local or contract workers, are going to be starting to suffer or are already suffering," he said.

As for the federalization lawsuit, Reyes said that is up to the courts. The administration hopes to share the economic report and continue discussions with the U.S. Congress and the new U.S. administration. New CNMI delegate Gregorio Sablan will also engage in discussions.

ONE

From Page 1

secondary levels.

PSS was above average in all categories, although only slightly at the secondary level. The nationwide average for secondary schools' student-to-teacher ratio was 12. PSS had a ratio of 12.6 students per teacher. Virginia had the lowest ratio (5.8) while California had the highest (23.4). American Samoa had a ratio 17.3 at the secondary level.

At the elementary level, PSS had a student-to-teacher ratio of 24.7, more than the nationwide average of 20.2 students per teacher. At 11.5 students per teacher, Maine had the lowest ratio at the elementary level, while Utah had the highest ratio at 31.5 students per teacher. American Samoa had a ratio of 18.5.

PSS had one of the highest students-to-teacher ratios for kindergartens at 33 students per teacher. The nationwide average is 21.1. Kentucky had the highest students to teacher ratio at the kindergarten level with 42.6 students per teacher. Alabama had the lowest ratio at 11. American Samoa had a ratio of 24.7 kindergarten students to every teacher.

ZONING

From Page 1

The new Saipan Zoning Law was signed by Gov. Benigno R. Fitial on Dec. 21, 2007; it became effective on Feb. 1, 2008, with a six-month grace period for businesses to comply with the building and sign design requirements of the new law.

Tilley emphasized that the grace period has already lapsed, therefore, as of Aug. 1, all existing adult businesses on Saipan should already be aligned with the law.

"We find many of the businesses violating the law but we just don't have enough time at this point to issue the notices," Tilley said.

The new law defines many types of business as adult and there are specific definitions for each one, including adult cabaret, adult motel, adult motion picture theater, adult theater, escort agency, massage parlor, nude model studio, sex shop and sexual encounter center.

The so-called adult viewing booth is not allowed anywhere on Saipan.

One of the requirements is that advertising displays describing certain body parts or sex acts must not be visible to the public.

It also requires that building openings and windows of the business establishment must be screened to prevent the public from seeing inside.

Entrances must also be posted with a visible sign stating that no minors are allowed to enter.

The law requires that signs must not display flashing lights, neon lighting or other internal illumination or up-lighting and it must be in the English language.

Other languages than English may be included but the text must have an exact translation in English and the text must not be larger than the English text.

Signs must not advertise unlawful services or specified sexual activities and the sign background must be a uniform and solid color and that the lettering must be in one print type, size and solid color.

The law also allows only two signs, with the primary sign not exceeding 50 square feet and the secondary sign not exceeding 20 square feet.

The Zoning Office explained, though, that not all massage parlors are considered adult businesses.

Businesses offering the methods of practice or the legitimate techniques of physicians, chiropractors, physical therapists, massage therapists or athletic trainers, and that are professionally licensed or certified by the appropriate governmental agency, are not considered adult businesses.

Not also considered adult businesses are massage facilities located in hotels that have more than 20 rooms; businesses in which massage services account for less than 10 percent of gross revenue or floor area; and homes in which massage is done for children by traditional healers recognized by the customs of the CNMI.

NMI joins Asia's largest travel mart in China

Over 2,000 participants visited the CNMI booth during the four-day China International Travel Mart held Nov. 20-23, 2008, at the Shanghai New International Expo Center. CITM is the largest professional travel mart in Asia and draws the attention of people in the tourism industry worldwide.

Marianas Visitors Authority and its two market partners in China, Century Tours and Tinian Dynasty Holiday, manned a large booth at a strategic location near the entrance of the exhibition hall. The booth was decorated with images of the CNMI and featured a sweeping archway and other innovative features. Staff answered inquires and distributed brochures, package flyers, destination CDs, and souvenirs to remind them of the beauties of Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY

The promotional booth of Saipan, Tinian and Rota at the China International Travel Mart allowed the Marianas Visitors Authority and its market partners to reach over 2,000 individuals in the tourism industry with information aimed at enticing more visitors to the islands. The travel mart was held November 20-23, 2008, in Shanghai.

CITM is organized by the China National Tourism Association, and participants come from all sectors of the travel industry, including international and domestic tourism organizations, travel agencies, hotels, airlines and related travel companies.

Following the success of the travel mart, MVA Managing director Perry Tenorio reemphasized the importance of the China market for the CNMI tourism industry.

"MVA, Century Tours, and Tinian Dynasty Holiday have been able to get the CNMI's message out to a large number of important players and consumers in the China travel industry," said Tenorio. "Based on the Department of Homeland Security's semi-annual regulatory agenda published this week, we echo the concern of the Governor and legislative leadership about the possible exclusion of the China and Russia markets in the joint Guam-CNMI visa waiver program. MVA and its travel partners will continue to promote travel from this significant, emerging market as long as allowable."

Leng Bai, MVA marketing specialist for the China market, said: "Following the successful hosting of the Olympic Games, there is a lot of confidence in China's economy. Century Tours and Tinian Dynasty Holiday chartered Shanghai Airlines to resume the Shanghai-Saipan direct flight in September 2008. However, we know the only way outbound figures to the CNMI from China will increase in 2009 is if we are able to continue the visa waiver program."

Bai noted that the work of Century Tours and Tinian Dynasty Hotel at CITM resulted in nearly full booking for December charters from Shanghai, an added bonus to the average load factor of 85 percent since late September. During the travel mart, Bai was also interviewed by *Metro Express*, the most popular daily paper in Shanghai for white-collar workers.

MVA attends travel shows in China, Japan, and Korea. The regular exposure of tourist industry professionals to the many attractions of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota is crucial to raising the awareness of travel markets and to the continued development of the CNMI tourist industry. ***(MVA)***

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Pursuant to 4 CMC, Div. 7, Section 7306 (i) of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, OIC Marianas Insurance Corporation is making its intention known of increasing the company's paid-up capital and surplus in accordance with this statute.

HENRY TORRES
General Manager
OIC Marianas Insurance Corporation
1st Flr. Chong's Bldg.
Pale Arnold Rd., Gualo Rai
PMB 229 Box 10000
Saipan, MP 96950

Northern Mariana Islands RETIREMENT FUND

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to 1 CMC, Division 9, §9910, Governor Benigno R. Fitial and Lt. Governor Timothy P. Villagomez, through the NMI Retirement Fund Board of Trustees/Workers' Compensation Commission/Group Health & Life Insurance Trust Fund, are hereby giving notice that the Board of Trustees will hold its ***Regular*** meeting on **Tuesday, December 2, 2008 at 9:00 a.m.** at the NMI Retirement Fund Conference Room, Saipan.

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
- A. Call to Order
- B. Roll Call
- C. Adoption of Agenda
- D. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting:
  - 1. October 23, 2008

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

III. REPORTS
- A. Report of the Chairman
  - 1. ROC No. 08-013
- B. Report of the Administrator / Correspondence
  - 1. R OA No. 08-013
- C. Report of the Comptroller
  - 1. Financials
    - a) NMIRF
    - b) GHLITF
    - c) WCC
  - 2. Drawdown Request
    - a) October 24, 2008
  - 3. Transition Update
- D. Reports of the Committees
  - 1. Finance & Investment Committee
  - 2. Operations & Personnel Committee
  - 3. Policies, Programs & Legislative Review Committee
  - 4. GH&L and WCC Committee
- E. Reports of the Investment Director
  - 1. Status of Investment/Market Condition
    - a) Investment Policy
    - b) Crisis Management Policy & Plan
  - 2. Report of Housing Loan Program
- F. Communications
  - 1. Internal Auditor Reports
- G. Other Matters

IV. LEGAL MATTERS
- A. Reports of the Legal Counsels
  - 1. Report of the Board Counsel
    - a) Lawsuit
  - 2. Report of the In-house Counsel
    - a) Update on Administrative Appeals
  - 3. Report of the Hearing Officer

V. OLD BUSINESS
- 1. BR 08-001 Matters
  - a) Pension Application Matters
  - b) P.L. 15-98
  - c) Disability Applicants
- 2. DC Plan Update Report
- 3. Rota and Tinian Office Space
- 4. Pension Software Update
- 5. Time Clock Matter
- 6. Personnel Matters Update
  - a) Desk Audits
  - b) Position Vacancies
- 7. FY '09 Fund Travel Matters
- 8. Legal Representation
- 9. CGECU Matter

VI. NEW BUSINESS
- 1. Administrator Position
- 2. Pension Application Matters
  - a) Duenas, R.
  - b) Villagomez, T.P.
- 3. PSS – Request for Additional Office Space
- 4. Guma Hustisia – Infrastructure Request
- 5. Status of Audit Request – Public Auditor
- 6. 2009 Money Manager Presentation Schedule
- 7. Funding Crisis, Solvency, and Pension Benefits Obligations Emergencies

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS
- A. Announcements
- B. Next Meeting
- C. Adjournment

/s/ JUAN T. GUERRERO
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Opinion

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Saipan Tribune
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EDITORIAL

Name those cuts

"To make the investments we need," President-elect Barack Obama said Monday, "we'll have to scour our federal budget, line by line, and make meaningful cuts and sacrifices, as well, something I'll be discussing further tomorrow." When Tuesday arrived, however, Mr. Obama wasn't much more specific. On one level, that's understandable; it will be difficult enough for the new administration to come up with a detailed budget by the time that is due in February. Yet Mr. Obama is talking about adding hundreds of billions of dollars in federal debt. That is reasonable under the dire economic circumstances, but it is scarcely adequate to couple that with platitudes about eliminating wasteful spending. As Mr. Obama well knows, and as his first-rate new budget director, Peter R. Orszag, understands as keenly as anyone, it will take far more than that to get the nation's fiscal house in order.

Mr. Obama spoke of meaningful cuts, but the example he cited Tuesday—crop subsidy overpayments to millionaire farmers not entitled to receive them—was especially galling. The supposed amount involved—$49 million over four years—is puny in the context of a $3 trillion annual budget. Even worse, Mr. Obama, after inveighing on the campaign trail about "multimillion-dollar subsidies" for "agribusiness lobbyists," then supported a farm bill stuffed with just such subsidies. "With so much at stake, we cannot make the perfect the enemy of the good," Mr. Obama said of that measure, which also included significant increases in food stamp spending. Fine, but that does not augur well for President Obama's willingness to stand up to such subsidies, or his ability to convince his former congressional colleagues to "shed the spending that we don't need."

Mr. Obama was on firmer ground when he talked about focusing on "one of the biggest long-run challenges that our budget faces, namely the rising cost of health care in both the public and private sectors." Getting health-care costs under control as a key to reining in entitlement spending has been a particular interest of Mr. Orszag's during his tenure as director of the Congressional Budget Office. He has particularly stressed the importance of developing information about the comparative effectiveness of various medical treatments and reforming Medicare payments accordingly.

Yet here, too, Mr. Obama engaged in a bit of happy talk, skating lightly over the difficult choices that controlling health-care costs will entail. Investing in electronic medical records may be a wise use of federal money, but the returns on that alone will be inadequate for the task. Figuring out which treatments provide the most bang for the buck is important, but that approach will only restrain spending if payments are adjusted accordingly. That won't be popular, with physicians, drug companies or patients. And slowing the growth of health-care costs alone won't be enough to deal with the fiscal ramifications of the baby boomers' retirement. Tuesday may not have been the moment for Mr. Obama to lay all this out, but at some point he is going to have to stop talking vaguely about the need for "sacrifice" and be more candid about what that will entail.

(c) 2008, The Washington Post

The many stories of Thanksgiving

By KARL JACOBY
SPECIAL TO THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

When Americans sit down to our annual Thanksgiving meal with family and friends, we like to imagine that we are reenacting a scene that first took place in 1621. That year, having made a successful harvest after a brutal winter that killed half their number, the 50 or so surviving Colonists in Plymouth "entertained and feasted," in the words of one, a visiting delegation of nearby Wampanoag Indians, led by "their greatest king," Massasoit.

American holidays, however, sometimes reveal more about what we have forgotten than what we remember. Historical records indicate that the parties dined on venison and corn rather than on the stuffing, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie Americans have come to associate with Thanksgiving, and that the feast probably took place in the early autumn rather than in November. Moreover, it is not even clear that the Pilgrims referred to their 1621 celebration as a thanksgiving. To devout Pilgrims, a day of thanksgiving was usually a solemn religious undertaking, marked by worship and, often, fasting. It was not a day spent gorging on wild deer and engaging in "recreations" with one's Indian neighbors.

Although there were sporadic local Thanksgiving days in Colonial and early America, it was not until the middle of the Civil War—1863—that President Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation making the last Thursday in November a national holiday of Thanksgiving. Lincoln's statement suggested that thanks were being given as much for "the advancing armies and navies of the Union" as for a bountiful harvest, and the president urged special prayers for "all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged."

Not surprisingly, few at the time viewed Thanksgiving as a private, family occasion. Instead, Northern civilians donated turkey and cranberries to feed Union troops, while Jefferson Davis declared separate Thanksgiving holidays for the Confederacy.

During Reconstruction, many Southerners initially expressed reluctance at celebrating what they saw to be a Yankee holiday. And yet it was at this moment, as the recently rejoined United States struggled to reconcile its populace, that it became useful to reinvent the history of Thanksgiving. Most Americans found it far more pleasant to imagine this American holiday as originating not during the traumas of the 1860s but rather during the more distant past of the early 1600s. To partisans of the Union and the Confederacy alike, the image of Pilgrims and Indians sitting down together to a shared meal offered a comforting vision of peace between potential rivals.

Yet this new image of Thanksgiving not only allowed Americans to gloss over the deep divisions that had led to the Civil War but also overlooked much of the subsequent history of the Pilgrims' relations with their Indian neighbors. About 50 years after Massasoit and his fellow Wampanoags enjoyed their harvest meal at Plymouth, the Colonists' seizures of Wampanoag land would precipitate a vicious war between Plymouth Colony and the Wampanoags, now led by Massasoit's son, Metacom.

Most of the other peoples in New England at first tried to avoid the conflict between the onetime participants in the "first Thanksgiving." But the confrontation soon engulfed the entire region, pitting the New England Colonies against a fragile alliance of Wampanoags, Narragansetts, Nipmucs and other American Indian groups. Although these allies succeeded in killing hundreds of Colonists and burning British settlements up to the very fringes of Boston itself, the losses suffered by New England's indigenous peoples were even more devastating. Thousands died over the two years of the war, and many of those captured were sold into slavery in the British West Indies, including Metacom's wife and 9-year-old son.

Metacom met his end at the hands of a Colonial scouting party in August 1676. His killers quartered and decapitated his body and sent Metacom's head to Plymouth, where for two decades it would be displayed prominently on a pike outside the colony's entrance. That same year, as the violence drew to a close, the colony of Connecticut declared a "day of Publique Thankesgiving" to celebrate "the subdueing of our enemies."

Perhaps it is not surprising that we choose to remember the Thanksgiving of 1621 and to forget the Thanksgiving of 1676. Who, after all, would not prefer to celebrate a moment of peaceful unity rather than one of bloody conflict? But if our public holidays are meant to be moments for self-reflection as well as self-congratulation, we should think of Thanksgiving not as a perpetual reenactment of the "first Thanksgiving" of 1621 but instead as a dynamic event whose meaning has shifted.

Indeed, commemorating all the many reasons Americans have expressed thanks over the centuries allows us to come to a more complete and more honest understanding of our history. For while we cannot change events in the past, we do have the power to decide what we wish to be thankful for now and in the future.

Jacoby is an associate professor of history at Brown University and the author of Shadows at Dawn: A Borderlands Massacre and the Violence of History.

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, Century Insurance Building, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Our shortsighted border policy keeps the wrong people out

By EDWARD ALDEN
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

The day after the Nov. 4 presidential election, I was chatting with a young immigrant from Sudan as I waited to do a radio interview. He was gushing over the election results. "Can you imagine when he puts his hand on the Bible and says, 'I, Barack Hussein Obama'?" he said, putting the emphasis on the middle name. "It is amazing."

For many in America's immigrant communities, the election of the son of a Kenyan father and an American mother represents not so much a healing of America's racial wounds as a chance to bridge the divide that has opened between the United States and the rest of the world in the past eight years. Of the many mistakes we made in the reaction to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, one of the most damaging was slamming the door on our friends in an ill-considered effort to keep our enemies out.

Instead of continuing to embrace the massive flow of talent, energy and initiative that the rest of the world has long offered the United States, we launched an expensive, futile experiment to see whether we could seal our borders against the ills of the world, from terrorists to drugs to illegal migrants. This effort has betrayed both our ideals and our interests. Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano, a skilled hand at handling border issues who is Obama's apparent choice for secretary of homeland security, has a rare opportunity to get immigration policy back on track—to improve our security without sacrificing our openness.

The current system was built in the wake of 9/11, but it will have to be reformed in the shadow of the economic crisis. That will be a political challenge, but we have already driven away too many talented immigrants through short-sighted policies that see them more as a threat than as a windfall for the U.S. economy. Immigrant numbers will fall during the recession as job opportunities dwindle, but when the economy recovers, we will find ourselves competing to get them back.

Napolitano could start her overhaul by considering the case of Imad Daou. Like the president-elect's father, Daou came to the United States on a student visa. A Christian from Lebanon, he arrived here in 2003 to study computer science at Texas A&M International University in Laredo. He fell in love with and became engaged to a Mexican-American woman, and in November 2003, they crossed the Rio Grande to visit her family in Mexico and share the news. But when the couple tried to cross back into Texas, U.S. border officials discovered that Daou had failed to comply with a rule put in place by John Ashcroft's Justice Department after 9/11, requiring all young men from Muslim and Arab countries to re-register with the U.S. government 30 days after arriving in the United States. Daou was unaware of the requirement.

He was slapped in handcuffs and jailed in Laredo for more than two months before being deported to Lebanon. The couple was married in the jail before he left, and a year later, his wife was able to bring him to live with her in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, which has been turned into a free-fire zone by warring drug gangs. Now she crosses the border each day to go to her teaching job in Laredo. He cannot accompany her; his deportation carried an automatic five-year ban on re-entering the United States, and he would need a pardon from the U.S. government before he could return.

Why is this software engineer, now working for a firm in Mexico, being kept out? Because of a regulation that no longer exists. A year after Daou was deported, the Department of Homeland Security abolished the re-registration requirement, saying it had been of no use in identifying terrorists. "They put the rules in place to catch bad people," Daou told me, "and the good people fall into the trap." He just heard from Washington last month: It will be at least another year before his pardon application will even be reviewed.

Daou's story was only one of dozens of similar tales I have heard over the past several years. In all of them, measures aimed at catching or deterring terrorists instead trapped those who had, like so many waves of immigrants before them, followed their dreams and ambitions by coming to America. But they arrived in a different country.

After the shock of 9/11, the United States confronted a deadly serious challenge: how to prevent future terrorists from coming here to carry out further attacks. Many intelligent and overdue initiatives were rolled out, and they have made the country safer. In place of the fragmented and partial terrorist "watch lists" used before the 2001 attacks, for instance, the government has created a single, integrated list available to all front-line border officials and overseas embassies. DHS now gathers advance information on all overseas passengers to help identify potential threats before flights land in the United States. And great strides have been made in improving the security of identification documents and matching them to an individual's fingerprints so that terrorists or criminals cannot use false papers to enter the country. These "smart border" measures have largely been implemented without undue disruption to legitimate visitors or immigrants to the United States.

Openness to immigrants and to foreign students, entrepreneurs and visitors has long been this country's secret weapon. The world's best and brightest come to the United States in large numbers to study or work temporarily, and many end up staying. Early in the campaign, Obama lamented the post-9/11 decline in visas for foreign students, which he said "used to be one of the single best public-diplomacy tools in our possession."

But alongside such sensible initiatives, the Bush administration decided to use immigration laws in far more aggressive and ruthless ways. Few Americans are aware of the vast powers the government wields here. Border inspectors can comb the laptop computer files of anyone entering the country, citizen or non-citizen, merely on suspicion of wrongdoing; ordinary constitutional protections against unreasonable search and seizure do not apply. Non-Americans suspected of violating immigration rules can be jailed for months or even years while their cases grind through immigration courts or while they await deportation. The government has exercised these powers to their fullest since 9/11.

Such trampling of American ideals is matched only by the damage to our interests. Openness to immigrants and to foreign students, entrepreneurs and visitors has long been this country's secret weapon. The world's best and brightest come to the United States in large numbers to study or work temporarily, and many end up staying. Early in the campaign, Obama lamented the post-9/11 decline in visas for foreign students, which he said "used to be one of the single best public-diplomacy tools in our possession."

No country has matched our ability to attract and inspire the world's talent, and the U.S. economy has reaped the benefits. While economic downturns inevitably lead to accusations that foreigners are stealing American jobs, the reality is that we have long attracted immigrants who innovate, create jobs and boost our economy. Some 40 percent of all new start-up companies in Silicon Valley, for instance, are headed by immigrants, according to a 2006 study for the National Venture Capital Association. But it doesn't take too many stories of delays, abuses or mistreatment at the hands of U.S. border or immigration officials to discourage people from coming here, particularly those whose talents offer them plenty of other options.

Not surprisingly, foreign enrollment at U.S. universities fell after 9/11, ending more than four decades of virtually uninterrupted growth. That trend has begun to reverse in the past two years, in part because of hard work by some DHS officials to ease the student visa application process. But in the meantime, Europe, Australia, Canada and even Japan have aggressively and successfully recruited foreign students and seen sharp rises in enrollment.

Overseas visits have yet to return to pre-9/11 levels, despite the weak dollar that until recently had made the United States a bargain for tourists. In a survey conducted earlier this year by the Council on State Governments, investment-promotion officials in three out of four states said they had faced problems getting visas for potential foreign investors. And the difficulties that U.S. companies face in recruiting the best foreign workers have led some, including Microsoft, to move some operations abroad to remain competitive.

Although several of the most disruptive post-9/11 measures have been eased or removed, the world has grown much warier of the United States. We continue to make it inordinately difficult for people to come here by requiring personal interviews of all visa applicants, even those who have been here many times before. Others face overly long delays for security screening, and many become entangled in the morass of a complex immigration system in desperate need of reform. While some progress is being made on those problems, the bulk of the money (as Napolitano has seen up close in Arizona) is pouring into the construction of barriers on the southern border, the hiring of more Border Patrol agents and the creation of an elaborate system to track the entry and exit of every foreigner who comes to the United States.

Tom Ridge, the former secretary of homeland security, told me that after 9/11, "The world was kind of surprised that we pulled in the welcome mat so quickly." The 2008 election was largely about two issues: restoring America's economy at home and repairing its image abroad. Putting out the welcome mat again is vital to both.

Alden is the author of The Closing of the American Border: Terrorism, Immigration and Security Since 9/11. *He is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and a former Washington bureau chief for the* Financial Times. Author's e-mail: ealden@cfr.org.

Send Bill Clinton to the Senate

By KARL E. MEYER and SHAREEN BLAIR BRYSAC
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

Amid the blizzard of resumes blanketing Washington as the Obama era dawns, there is a superbly qualified candidate for full employment whose name has been overlooked. We refer, of course, to William Jefferson Clinton, America's 42nd chief executive and commander in chief. Yet now, by a wonderful combination of circumstances, comes an opportunity to harness his unquestioned political talents to benefit his country, the Democratic Party, New York state and his spouse. If, as is expected, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton becomes secretary of state, New York Gov. David Paterson could send her husband to the U.S. Senate.

Doing so would spare the governor the agonizing dilemma of choosing from the 20 or so Democrats already named as contenders for the junior senator's seat. Those mentioned include six sitting members of the House of Representatives (three of each sex), Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, Caroline Kennedy and her cousin Robert Kennedy Jr., Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown (an African American), and Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion Jr. (who is Hispanic). In this no-win competition, Paterson has to balance claims of gender, race, ethnicity and geography. He could wind up gaining one grateful ally while alienating not only all the losers but also millions of members of the disparate constituencies that each represents.

Hence the appeal of Bill Clinton. Who in his party could question so historic and dazzling a choice? In a stroke, the appointment would provide Sen. Clinton's indefatigable husband with a fitting day job, serve the interests of a state beset by a meltdown in its most vital economic sector and offer a refreshing reverse twist on a tradition whereby deceased male senators, representatives or governors are succeeded by their widows.

It wouldn't be the first time an emeritus U.S. president was sent to Congress. In 1828, John Quincy Adams, like his father a prickly but principled chief executive, lost his bid for a second term to Andrew Jackson, the first populist Democrat. Two years later, Massachusetts voters elected Adams to the House of Representatives, where he served until 1848. "Old Man Eloquent" was renowned for his impassioned opposition to slavery, leading an eight-year fight to reverse a "gag rule" promoted by Southerners that required the automatic tabling of any petitions opposing slaveholding.

And it was thanks to John Quincy Adams that the Smithsonian Institution exists in its current diverse form. In 1836, Congress voted to accept a generous bequest from James Smithson, a Briton who willed the funds "to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men." The question of how to use this unexpected and unprecedented windfall of $508,318.46 (in gold, filling 11 boxes), then went to a select committee chaired by Adams. He fought tirelessly to protect the bequest from "hungry and worthless political jackals," and, thanks to his efforts, a measure honoring the intentions of the donor was finally approved in 1846.

Who better than Bill Clinton to deepen and energize such a tradition? Why shouldn't former presidents continue their political lives in Congress? The British have long benefited from a tradition whereby former prime ministers acquire a seat and voice in the House of Lords. In today's unusual circumstances, surely beyond the imagination of any novelist, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton would not have to fret about suitable protocol for dealing with her spouse on foreign trips were he occupied, full time, with senatorial duties.

Karl E. Meyer and Shareen Blair Brysac are the authors of Kingmakers: the Invention of the Modern Middle East.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy and breezy with isolated showers. East winds 20 to 25 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲88° ▼78°	▲87° ▼77°	▲87° ▼78°	▲88° ▼78°	▲88° ▼78°

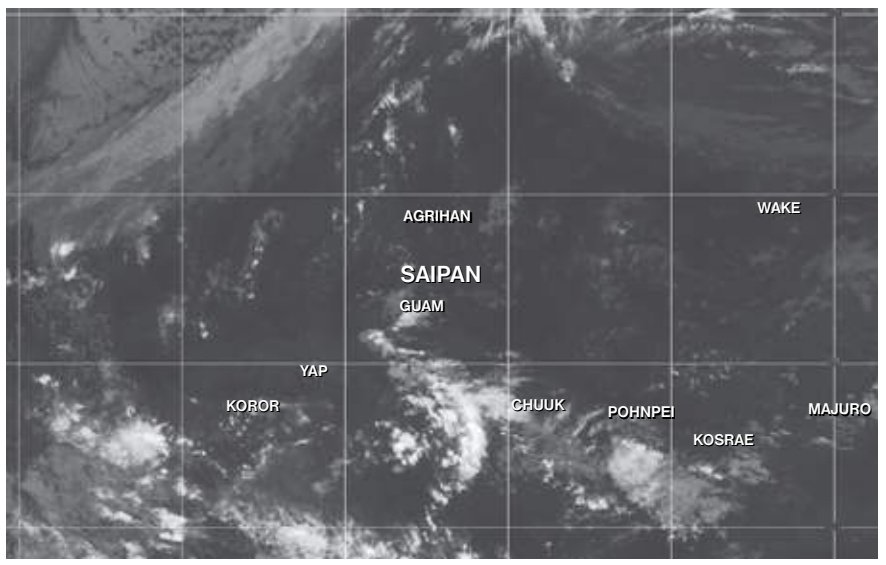
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Showers	▲84	▼76
Palau	Showers	▲86	▼77
Yap	Showers	▲88	▼77
Chuuk	Rain	▲87	▼77
Pohnpei	Showers	▲87	▼74
Kosrae	Showers	▲89	▼77
Majuro	Showers	▲85	▼76

Around The Globe

Auckland	Showers	▲70	▼59
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	▲50	▼30
Hong Kong	Mostly Sunny	▲77	▼64
Honolulu	Rain	▲77	▼69
London	Showers	▲46	▼36
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny	▲74	▼52
Manila	Rain	▲84	▼76
Melbourne	Showers	▲62	▼47
Miami	Mostly Sunny	▲80	▼65
New York	Partly Sunny	▲46	▼37
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	▲55	▼40
Paris	Mostly Cloudy	▲38	▼34
Pusan	Mostly Sunny	▲46	▼30
Rome	Showers	▲55	▼53
Salem	Mostly Sunny	▲54	▼38
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	▲68	▼50
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	▲43	▼31
Tokyo	Cloudy	▲62	▼41
Washington, DC	Cloudy	▲47	▼34

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, FRIDAY, NOV. 28, 2008
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A cold front runs southwestward from 25N140E to beyond 130E at 20N. Extensive cloudiness and patchy rain are found along and up to 450 miles northwest of the front. A shear line arcs westward from 23N180 to beyond 25N at 155E. Extensive cloud-cover and patchy rain are found along and up to 250 miles north of the shear line. A weak surface trough stretches northeastward from 3N141E to 10N145E. Scattered showers and a few thunderstorms are present south of Guam between Yap and Chuuk within an area bounded by a line from 13N144E to 4N140E to 3N147E to 7N152E to 10N150E to 10N145E back to 13N144E. Trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers and a few thunderstorms east of Chuuk and south of Pohnpei within 180 miles of a line extending southeastward from 6N153E to 2N163E. Scattered showers are also evident over Kosrae between 3N and 5N from 163E to 166E and over southern portions of the Marshall Islands between 6N and 9N from 172E to 175E.

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
2:27AM Today	Low Tide:	0.4 Feet
9:44AM Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet
3:02PM Today	Low Tide:	1.3 Feet
7:23PM Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:26AM	5:44 PM
Sunday	6:27AM	5:45 PM
Monday	6:27AM	5:45 PM
Tuesday	6:28AM	5:45 PM
Wednesday	6:28AM	5:45 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	7:32AM	6:51 PM
Sunday	9:09AM	8:34 PM
Monday	9:09AM	8:34 PM
Tuesday	9:54AM	9:26 PM
Wednesday	10:34AM	8:16 PM

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 19, 2008

DEPARTURES

Saipan-Rota			
CO9597	11:50am	12:25pm	1,7
Saipan-Guam			
CO9317	5:00am	5:50am	Daily
CO9313	8:30am	9:20am	Daily
CO9597	11:50am	1:20pm	1,7 via Rota
CO9601	12:30pm	1:20pm	2,3,4,5,6
CO9603	3:30pm	4:20pm	Daily
CO9605	6:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
CO9599	9:30pm	10:20pm	Daily
Saipan-Narita			
NW 099	5:00am	7:40am	Daily
NW 078	8:25am	1:30pm	2,3,4,5,6,7
NW 075	4:55pm	7:30pm	Daily
Saipan-Osaka			
NW 083	4:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
Saipan-Nagoya			
NW 078	8:25am	11:05am	Daily
Saipan-Incheon			
OZ 604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ 604	2:40am	6:30am	2,3,4,5,6,7
OZ 606	3:20pm	7:00pm	Daily
Saipan-Busan			
OZ 608	3:50am	7:20am	1,4,5,7
Saipan-Shanghai			
FM 844	2:50am	5:40am	2,6
Rota-Guam			
CO 9597	12:50pm	1:20pm	1,7
Guam-Manila			
CO 893	5:50pm	9:10pm	3,5 via Koror
CO 933	8:00pm	9:40pm	Daily
PR 111	6:00am	7:50am	1,2,4,6,7

ARRIVALS

Rota-Saipan			
CO 9598	3:25am	4:00am	5,6
Guam-Saipan			
CO 9316	2:30am	3:20am	1,2,3,4,7
CO9598	2:30am	4:00am	5,6 via Rota
CO9596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
CO9600	10:20am	11:10am	Daily
CO9602	2:00pm	2:50pm	Daily
CO9604	5:00pm	5:50pm	Daily
CO9606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily
Narita-Saipan			
NW 076	10:15am	2:40pm	Daily
NW 077	6:25pm	1:25am+1	2,3,4,5,6,7
NW 100	8:45pm	1:15am+1	Daily
Osaka-Saipan			
NW 084	10:40am	3:10pm	Daily
Nagoya-Saipan			
NW 077	9:00pm	1:25am+1	Daily
Incheon-Saipan			
OZ 605	9:00am	2:20pm	Daily
OZ 603	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ 603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1,2,3,4,5,6
Busan-Saipan			
OZ 607	9:30pm	2:40am+1	3,4,6,7
Shanghai-Saipan			
FM 843	7:15pm	1:50am+1	1,5
Guam-Rota			
CO 9598	2:30am	3:00am	5,6
Manila-Guam			
CO 892	10:10pm	5:30am+1	3,5 via Koror
CO 934	11:10pm	4:40am+1	Daily
PR 110	10:10pm	4:00am+1	1,3,5,6,7

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

PICTURES

- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

HOW TO SUBMIT

- E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com or jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com.
- Fax: (670) 235-3740
- Mail: PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan, CNMI 96950
- Drop off: 2nd Floor, CIC Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

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- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

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ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

Schedule of Religious Services

CATHOLIC

Mt. Carmel Cathedral
Sunday Mass: 6am, 9am, 11am and 6pm
Monday-Saturday: 6am
Wednesday: 6am and 6pm

Korean Center
Sunday: 10:30am
Wednesday: 10am
Thursday-Friday: 8pm
Saturday: 3pm and 7:30pm

Kristo Rai Parish
Sunday Mass: 6am, 8am and 9:30am
Monday- Saturday: 6am
Wednesday: 6am and 6pm
Saturday: 6am and 6pm

Nuestra Senora De Soledad Parish
Wednesday Mass: 6pm
First Friday Healing Mass: 6pm
Saturday Mass: 6pm
Sunday Masses: 7:30am & 9am

Saint Jude Parish
Sunday: 6am, 8am, 10am
Wednesday and Thursday: 6pm

San Antonio Parish
Sunday: 6am and 8am
Tuesday and Friday: 6pm

San Francisco de Borja-Rota
Sunday: 6am and 8am
Monday-Saturday: 6am
Wednesday: 6pm

San Isidro-Rota
Sunday: 5am and 10am
Monday-Wednesday: 7pm
Thursday-Saturday: 5am and 7pm

San Jose (Oleai) Parish
Sunday: 6am and 7:30am
Tuesday-Wednesday and Friday-Saturday: 6pm

San Roque Parish
Sunday: 9am
Wednesday: 6pm
Saturday: 10:30am

San Vicente Parish
Sunday: 6am, 9am and 6pm
Monday-Saturday: 6pm

Santa Remedios
Sunday: 7:30am
Tuesday: 6pm
Saturday: 10am-Baptism

Santa Soledad
Sunday: 7:30am

PROTESTANT

Born Again Christian (Upper Room Int'l Ministries), Saipan
Wednesday Prayer and Healing Night: 8-10:30pm
Saturday Tagalog Service: 8-10:30pm
Sunday English Service: 9:30-11am
Sunday School for Children: 10-11am
Sunday Filipino Service: 7-9pm

Calvary Baptist Church, Saipan
Sunday School: 9am
Sunday Morning Worship: 10am
Sunday Evening Worship: 6pm
Wednesday Prayer Service: 7pm

Chinese Christian Church of Saipan
Worship Services: Sunday, 10am and 7:30pm
Bible Study: Tuesday-Friday, 9:25pm

Cornerstone Christian Church, Saipan
Worship/Study Opportunities
Adult Sunday School: 9am
Youth Sunday School: 9am
English Worship Service Sunday: 10am
Sunday Service: 5:30pm
Worship/Fellowship Sunday: 9:30pm
Evangelism/Follow-up: Sunday/Monday: 1:30/7:30pm
Worship Team: Monday/Saturday-9pm;
Cell Groups Tuesday: 7:30pm
Mid-week Service: 7:30pm
Prayer Meeting Wednesday: 7:30pm
Leader's Bible Study Friday: 7:30 pm
Cornerstone School of Ministry Saturday: 7:30pm

Episcopal/Anglican Church on Saipan
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Worship Service Sunday: Holy Communion 9:00am
Place: Vicarage, Chalan Laulau,
Call 235-0545 for directions

Grace Christian Assembly, Saipan
Worship Service: 9am
GBI Classes: 4-6pm
Prayer Meeting: Monday-Saturday: 6am
Sunday: 7am
Home Cell Bible Study: Wednesday-Friday: 7pm
Youth Service: Friday: 5:30pm

Iglesia Ni Cristo, Saipan
Wednesday: 7:45pm (Tagalog)
Thursday: 5:30am (English); 7:45 pm (English)
Saturday: 5:30am (Tagalog); 7:45pm (Tagalog)
Sunday: 6:45am (English)
Children Worship Service: Sunday, 9am (English)

Immanuel United Methodist Church Koblerville
Sunday Services
9:00 AM
Place of the church-next to Mt. Carmel Cathedral on Chalan Kanoa Dr. • Tel: 322-6158
Pastor JJ Matsumoto

Immanuel Methodist Church (Filipino Congregation)
Sunday: 7:00am-Choir Rehearsal
8:00am-Church Service (Tagalog)
9:15am-Sunday School
Wednesday: 6:30pm, home group
8:00pm-Prayer Meeting
Thursday: 7:30pm-Choir Practice (Church)
Saturday: 8:00pm-Choir Practice (Parsonage)

Jesus is Lord Church, Saipan
English Service: 9-11am, Sunday
Tagalog Service: 6-8pm, Sunday

Korean Presbyterian Church, Saipan
Sunday School: 8:20am
Sunday Adult: 10am
Sunday Adult: 11:30am
Sunday Evening: 7:30pm
Wednesday: 8pm

Life in the Son Christian Fellowship, Saipan
Sunday Worship Service: 10am–12noon
Tuesday: Leadership Institute 7pm-10pm
Wednesday: Corporate prayer 7pm-8pm
Last Friday of the month-prayer: 7pm-11pm
Friday: Youth on Fire: 7pm-9pm
Tel. No. 235-LIFE (5433)

Marianas Baptist Church, Saipan
English Worship Service: 9-10:30am
Evening Worship Service: 6-7pm
Children Sunday School: 9-10:30am
Tagalog Sunday School: 11am-12pm
English Sunday School: 11am-12pm
Korean Worship Service: 11am-12pm
Wednesday Prayer Meeting:
English, 7pm-8pm
Korean: 8:30pm-9:30pm

Missions Connection Ministry
Every Sunday Celebrations:
10am (English), 6pm (Tagalog)
Wednesday Bible Study: 7pm
Youth Impact Friday: 7pm
Saturday Prayer Meeting: 7pm

Northern Marianas Christian Church
Sunday Worship Service 10am Fina Sisu Housing FS#1 (Child care will be provided)
Friday Services @ 7pm Fina Sisu FS#1 for more info pls. contact Ryan 484-2620

Saipan Bible Fellowship Church
Sunday School: 9:30-10am
Divine Worship: 10am-11:30am
Evening Service: 7pm-8:30pm
Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8pm-9pm

Saipan Christian Church
Sunday: 7:30am-10am
Sunday: 6:30 pm -9pm
Monday: 8 pm -10pm (Prayer Meeting)
Thursday: 8pm-10pm (Cell Groups)

Saipan Church of Christ
Sunday Bible Class: 9am
Sunday Worship: 10am
Sunday Worship English: 6pm
Sunday Worship Tagalog: 7pm
Wednesday Bible Study: 7:30pm

Saipan Community Church
(Sunday Services)
Palau Service: 7:30am-9am
English Service: 10am-11:30am
Chuukese Service: 1pm-2:30pm
Filipino Service: 5:00pm-7:00pm

Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Saipan
(Saturday Church Services)
Sabbath School Program: 9-10am
Lesson Study: 10-10:40am
Divine Service: 11-12pm
Visitation: 3-4pm
Adventist Youth Program: 4:30-5:30pm
Sundown Worship: 6-7pm

First Baptist Church
(Formerly Saipan Baptist Church)
Afetna St., San Antonio

Sunday		
	9am	Sunday school
	10am	Regular worship
	6pm	worship
Wednesday		
	7pm	worship

Everyone is warmly welcome to attend our worship services. Transportation is readily available to anyone who needs a ride to our church. For further information, please call Pastor David M. Mclure at 234-1939/235-7779.

Thy Word Ministries Saipan Faith Center
Phone 234-0209
New Christian Charismatic Church Service located in Chalan Paio, Beach Road in the Sablan building on the 2nd floor above Subway Sandwiches.
Senior Pastors: George & Gail Kamakahi
Asst. Pastors: Eric & Penny Sakaguchi
Service Times
Sunday 10:00am Worship Service
Sunday 7pm Discipleship Classes
Tuesday 10:00am Bible Studies
Tuesday 6:00pm Intercessory Prayer
Tuesday 7:00pm Music Practice
Wednesday 7:00pm Mid-Week Service
Saturday 10:00am Evangelism

Upper Room International Ministries

Sunday	5:30am-6:30am	
Morning prayer		
	7am-9am	English service
	7am-9am	Sunday school
	10am-12noon	English service, Koblerville
Wednesday	7pm-9pm	Prayer meeting
Saturday	7pm-9pm	Tagalog service

Venue: Jason Presbyterian Church
Gualo Rai, Saipan

Victory Chapel Christian Fellowship Church
Sunday School: 9:30am
Sunday AM Worship:10:30am
Sunday PM Worship:7:00am
Wed Worship: 7:30pm
Prayer 45 min. Prior to Service Times
Morning Prayer: 6-8am M-S

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

Nov. 29, 1999

Lack of quorum delays approval of CIP money
Due to lack of quorum, the House of Representatives failed to pass several key appropriation measures during its session Friday, including legislation that will set aside funding for capital improvement projects under the forthcoming $60 million bond float. Only 13 representatives were present during the session—the first conducted by the 18-member House since the Nov. 6 midterm elections—short of the required 14 votes for appropriation bills. Reps. Frank G. Cepeda, Jose A. Hocog, Dino M. Jones, Max Timmo Olopai, and Herman T. Palacios were absent during the whole-day session that was called specifically for the legislation setting aside funds generated from the recent bank loan under a CIP financing scheme approved earlier by lawmakers.

Air Nauru unveils new look
Members of the Governor's Aviation Task Force made pitch last week with Air Nauru officials on the need for a direct Saipan-Manila service, according to Dave M. Sablan, chair of the Marianas Visitors Authority. During the meeting, Mr. Sablan pledged the CNMI's support for the service once it pushes through. He said the CNMI government will also help Air Nauru should it decide to take the routes dropped earlier by Continental Micronesia. The task force was asking Air Nauru to consider Saipan-Palau-Manila and Manila-Palau-Saipan.

Nov. 29, 2001

Tinian shuts door for Taliban
The federal government will have to allocate millions of dollars in additional funds for its military activities in the CNMI if plans to use Tinian as holding area for arrested terror suspects push through. Aside from the grave damage it will cause the Commonwealth's tourism industry, Tinian also lacks the necessary facilities to hole up and prosecute members of the Taliban and the Al-Qaida Network. Marianas Visitors Authority Board Member JM Guerrero said it is logistically difficult for the federal government to detain the suspected terrorists on Tinian, in case Guam balks at suggestions to hold them on the island-territory.

Chamber touts military exercises in FDM
Worried over the increasingly militant voices at the Senate regarding military activities in the Farallon de Mendinilla, the Saipan Chamber of Commerce yesterday sent an emissary to the upper chamber to secure its assurance over the continuation of the bombing exercises on the island. Mike Shaddeck, chairman of the chamber's military affairs committee, briefly called on Senate President Paul A. Manglona yesterday morning and managed to secure a promise for the approval of a resolution that would signify the Senate's support for military activities on Farallon de Mendinilla.

Nov. 29, 2003

Snag hits land payments bond
The finalization of the $40-million land compensation bond has hit a snag amid certain concerns raised by bond investors, Gov. Juan N. Babauta disclosed yesterday. CNMI officials were supposed to fly to Honolulu to complete the bond transaction but the governor said this trip has been delayed for one week. "There's a little hesitation among bond investors on the grade of the rating of the bonds and they are reevaluating that as we speak," the chief executive explained.

The Christmas season is officially on
Gov. Juan N. Babauta switched on last night the lights that illuminated the words "Peace on Earth" atop the Governor's Mansion on Capitol Hill to signal the Northern Marianas' official celebration of the Christmas season. The ceremonial switch-on, assisted by Marianas Visitors Authority's Vicky Benavente and Saipan Mayor Juan Borja Tudela, simultaneously lit up sculptures along Beach Road and in the Tanapag and San Roque areas.

Nov. 29, 2005

Three killed in vehicular accident
Three persons were killed while one was seriously injured in a vehicular accident along Beach Road in Chalan Laulau on early morning Sunday. Acting Department of Public Safety spokesman Eric David said the fatalities-two men and a woman-suffered severe injuries to the head and body and were pronounced dead on that same day at the Commonwealth Health Center. David said the fatalities, all Chinese workers aged 26 and 27, were on board a white 1997 four-door Honda Civic sedan.

Business

Malls, hotels next victims in new mortgage crisis

WASHINGTON (AP)—The full scope of the housing meltdown isn't clear and already there are ominous signs of a new crisis—one that could turn out the lights on malls, hotels and storefronts nationwide.

Even as the holiday shopping season begins in full swing, the same events poisoning the housing market are now at work on commercial properties, and the bad news is trickling in. Malls from Michigan to Georgia are entering foreclosure.

Hotels in Tucson, Ariz., and Hilton Head, S.C., also are about to default on their mortgages.

That pace is expected to quicken. The number of late payments and defaults will double, if not triple, by the end of next year, according to analysts from Fitch Ratings Ltd., which evaluates companies' credit.

"We're probably in the first inning of the commercial mortgage problem," said Scott Tross, a real estate lawyer with Herrick Feinstein in New Jersey.

That's bad news for more than just property owners. When businesses go dark, employees lose jobs. Towns lose tax revenue. School budgets and social services feel the pinch.

Companies have survived plenty of downturns, but economists see this one playing out like never before. In the past, when businesses hit rough patches, owners negotiated with banks or refinanced their loans.

But many banks no longer hold the loans they made. Over the past decade, banks have increasingly bundled mortgages and sold them to investors. Pension funds, insurance companies, and hedge funds bought the seemingly safe securities and are now bracing for losses that could ripple through the financial system.

"It's a toxic drug and nobody knows how bad it's going to be," said Paul Miller, an analyst with Friedman, Billings, Ramsey, who was among the first to sound alarm bells in the residential market.

Unlike home mortgages, businesses don't pay their loans over 30 years. Commercial mortgages are usually written for five, seven or 10 years with big payments due at the end. About $20 billion will be due next year, covering everything from office and condo complexes to hotels and malls.

The retail outlook is particularly bad. Circuit City and Linens 'n Things have sought bankruptcy protection. Home Depot, Sears, Ann Taylor and Foot Locker are closing stores.

Not-so-jolly economy brings woe to Santa's lap

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP)—Some of the kids crawling onto Santa Joe's lap this year have more than stuffed animals and video games on their most-wanted lists. Several times already this season, Joe Jackson has been asked to get Daddy a job or Mommy money to buy the house back.

"You see things behind the beard that nobody else will ever see or hear. I've had children just literally tear my heart out," said Jackson, who is pulling on his red suit for a 19th season of playing Santa at private parties and festivals in the northern part of the state.

The slumping economy has families across the nation facing one of their toughest Christmases in years. That means Santa Claus, the jolly confidante for so many under 10, is hearing more than simple requests for a new Nintendo Wii or Elmo Live.

"Children are very trusting of Santa. They are very open with him. They tell him things they normally wouldn't discuss with other people. And they usually ask Santa to fix things. They know he is someone who can grant wishes," said Timothy Connaghan, of Riverside, Calif., who has played Santa for 40 years and trained more than 1,500 other Santas across the country through his "School 4 Santas."

He coaches aspiring Kris Kringles to remember that a good Santa can't promise a new job or money to make everyone's Christmas dreams come true, "but he can tell them things are always going to get better," Connaghan said.

It's not just children who can use some of Santa's optimism. A Gallup poll earlier this month found consumers are going to spend $150 less this Christmas than last year. The $616 per person was the lowest amount since the research company began asking the question a decade ago.

At Columbia Place Mall in South Carolina, retailers already are trying to fight the trend by handing out thousands of coupon books. And while the traditionally harried shopping season had yet to arrive last week, even that mall's Santa, sitting in his plush chair waiting for the occasional child, had noticed fewer people making purchases.

Lakicha Mansfield strolled past the Old Navy, Zales and video game store without buying anything. As 4-year-old daughter Mahoganie Whitaker told Santa her wishes for a Cinderella doll, Hannah Montana bubbles and balloons, Mansfield said Christmas will be tough because she's been looking for work for nine months.

Nation

Huge crowds cheer NYC Thanksgiving Day Parade

NEW YORK (AP)—Val Bonner planned for a decade to attend the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on her 50th birthday, and this year she got her wish Thursday, joining throngs of holiday revelers in Manhattan cheering the giant balloons and thousands of marchers.

"It's just fabulous—I cried when I saw it," said Bonner, of Steilacoom, Wash. "This is my gift to myself. I've been saving for years for it. It's a dream come true."

Bonner, her husband Frank, and son Jack stood with shrieking, delighted children throwing confetti as the 82nd annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade wound its way through Manhattan streets under sunny skies.

Quincy Kersbergen of Wyckoff, N.J., found a prime viewing spot—perched on a police barricade near the beginning of the parade—and proclaimed herself a big fan of a giant dog balloon.

AP

The Buzz Lightyear float moves through Columbus Circle during the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade Thursday, Nov. 27, 2008 in New York.

"This is just fantastic!" the 11-year-old Kersbergen said. "So amazing to be here in person! I'm just so excited about today!"

New to the revelry this year were Buzz Lightyear, the square-jawed, action-figure astronaut from the 1995 film "Toy Story;" Horton, the compassionate elephant of Dr. Seuss books; and a five-story Smurf, a blue, gnome-like creature popularized by a TV show that began in 1981. Old favorites like Kermit and the Energizer Bunny also were back.

Organizers said more than a million spectators viewed the 82nd annual parade in person, with another 50 million watching on television. The 2.5-mile route winds from Central Park West and West 77th Street to Herald Square, in front of Macy's flagship store.

Crews on Wednesday inflated the 13 giant balloons and 31 smaller ones. Each giant balloon requires more than 5,000 cubic feet of helium, much of which supplier Linde North America intended to recover and recycle, said Nick Haines, the company's helium director for the Americas. Linde tested the process of sucking the gas out of the balloons, compressing it and later purifying it for resale last year.

Among the smaller balloons was a newcomer that pays tribute to graffiti artist Keith Haring, who died in 1990. The parade also featured 28 floats, 10 marching bands and performances by Miley Cyrus, Trace Adkins, James Taylor and the Radio City Rockettes.

Food banks report spike in needy on Thanksgiving

CHICAGO (AP)—The line for a Thanksgiving meal was long when the Chicago Christian Industrial League shelter opened Thursday morning, and volunteers served more than 200 people in the first 40 minutes—record demand for the shelter.

Among the hungry were familiar faces, people who had eaten their last Thanksgiving meal at the shelter and others who had helped provide those meals, said executive director Mary Shaver.

"These are the people who are always giving money—and now they're asking for help," Shaver said. "These were the people donating money to us."

As millions of American families gathered to give thanks for what they have, food banks and shelters across the country struggled to cope with a spike in demand for their services. With more people feeling the weight of the economic downturn, those who oversee the charities say they are seeing many new faces on food lines.

"Food bank after food bank tells me it's new faces, people they haven't seen before," said Ross Fraser, spokesman for Feed America, a Chicago-based charity that coordinates corporate donations to more than 200 U.S. food banks. "They will tell you it's the worst it's ever been."

"Starting about a year ago, we've seen a very significant spike in the demand," Fraser said. "It used to be the poorest of the poor who came to us for help." But higher food prices are affecting the working poor "and the needle is moving up in terms of the income we're starting to serve," he said.

Indian-Americans track down loved ones in Mumbai

ATLANTA (AP)—Angela Mulchandami was relieved to see her mother made it aboard a flight from Mumbai to Atlanta Thursday morning.

A day earlier, Mumbai was the scene of a highly coordinated terrorist attack that had killed at least 119 people at 10 sites, including several luxury hotels.

"It's hard not knowing how all of your loved ones are, especially when you are seeing it on TV," said the 25-year-old Mulchandami as she waited at the airport. "I didn't know if she had made the flight."

Indian-Americans and others across America with connections to the city under siege were frantically trying to get in touch with loved ones and colleagues Thursday. As they watched the scenes from Mumbai play out, Americans sent worried phone calls and e-mails to scores of friends and family.

Several Americans were among the injured. Andi Varagona of Nashville, Tenn., called her mother, Celeste Varagona, from a hospital Thursday and said she had been shot in the arm and leg while eating dinner at the Taj Mahal Palace and Tower hotel. Another Tennessee woman traveling with her was also injured, but her name was not immediately available, Celeste Varagona told The Associated Press.

A father and daughter from Virginia also were missing after being caught in an attack, said a spokeswoman for the spiritual group they were traveling with. Neither Alan Scherr, 58, nor his daughter Naomi Scherr, 13, had turned up by Thursday night, said Bobbie Garvey, spokeswoman for the Synchronicity Foundation. Both live and work at the group's headquarters in Faber, Va.

The other 23 members of the group who were traveling with the Scherrs have been accounted for, Garvey said. The group's Web site said two from America and two from Canada were shot and wounded, but are believed to be in stable condition. Their names weren't immediately available.

Indiana woman dies at 115 as world's oldest person

SHELBYVILLE, Ind. (AP)—Edna Parker, who became the world's oldest person more than a year ago, has died at age 115.

UCLA gerontologist Dr. Stephen Coles said Parker's great-nephew notified him that Parker died Wednesday at a nursing home in Shelbyville. She was 115 years, 220 days old, said Robert Young, a senior consultant for gerontology for Guinness World Records.

Parker was born April 20, 1893, in central Indiana's Morgan County and had been recognized by Guinness World Records as the world's oldest person since the 2007 death in Japan of Yone Minagawa, who was four months her senior.

Coles maintains a list of the world's oldest people and said Parker was the 14th oldest validated supercentenarian in history. Maria de Jesus of Portugal, who was born Sept. 10, 1893, is now the world's oldest living person, according to the Gerontology Research Group.

Parker had been a widow since her husband, Earl Parker, died in 1939 of a heart attack. She lived alone in their farmhouse until age 100, when she moved into a son's home and later to the Shelbyville nursing home.

AP

Edna Parker holds a rose that she was given during a birthday party for her in Shelbyville, Ind., in this Friday, April 18, 2008 file photo.

Although she never drank alcohol or tried tobacco and led an active life, Parker didn't offer tips for living a long life. Her only advice to those who gathered to celebrate when she became the oldest person was "more education."

Parker outlived her two sons, Clifford and Earl Jr. She also had five grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren and 13 great-great-grandchildren.

Don Parker, 60, said his grandmother had a small frame and a mild temperament. She walked a lot and kept busy even after moving into the nursing home, he said.

ACROSS THE NATION

Astronauts share freeze-dried Thanksgiving feast

HOUSTON (AP)—With hugs and handshakes, shuttle Endeavour's seven astronauts bid farewell to the international space station crew after they ate a Thanksgiving meal together of turkey, cornbread dressing and candied yams. "You've totally fixed us up on the inside and on the outside," station commander Mike Fincke told Endeavour's crew before the hatches between the station and shuttle shut. "You guys were such perfect guests. You left the place cleaner than you found it." The shuttle was set to undock early Friday and return to Florida on Sunday, completing a 16-day mission for Endeavour's crew. It delivered a new bathroom, kitchenette, two bedrooms, exercise equipment, and a system that purifies urine, sweat and condensation into drinking water. All is needed to double the space station's population to six next year. Endeavour astronauts also performed four spacewalks to clean and lubricate a jammed joint that rotates solar wings in the direction of the sun in order to generate power.

Police: Tip led to arrest of Reno rapist suspect

RENO, Nev. (AP)—Early in their investigation into the kidnapping and slaying of a young college woman, Reno police were convinced the suspect they described as a serial rapist was a chameleon who blended in with a community grieving the loss of Brianna Denison. "Likely he looks like somebody you would least suspect, but that is the person who is responsible for this crime," Deputy Police Chief Jim Johns said in February, a day after Denison's body was found. On Wednesday, the profundity of Johns' words emerged when police announced the arrest of a 27-year-old construction worker. James Michael Biela, a former Marine who trained in martial arts at an academy frequented by law enforcement officers, was arrested Tuesday afternoon while picking up his 4-year-old son from preschool. "He seemed like a nice, normal guy," Cindy Stern, a neighbor of Biela, told the Reno Gazette-Journal. "I guess killers don't wear a sign."

SUV plunges off Colo. highway overpass, killing 7

JOHNSTOWN, Colo. (AP)—An SUV plunged off an overpass in northern Colorado and hit a concrete embankment in a fiery crash early Thursday morning, killing all seven people inside it, including two young children, authorities said. Investigators haven't determined the identities or ages of the victims, Colorado State Trooper Gilbert Mares said. The Chevrolet Suburban was registered in Alberta, Canada, he said. Among the dead were an infant, a toddler, three other males and two females, Mares said. He said one of the males was driving. Larimer County coroner's investigator Maury Miller said a driver's license was found in the wreckage, but it was impossible to match the photo to any of the victims. Autopsies were planned for Friday.

Asia

Indian commandos storm besieged Jewish center

An Indian commando gives relief to another at the Taj Hotel in Mumbai, India, Friday, Nov. 28, 2008.

AP

MUMBAI, India (AP)—Masked Indian commandos dropped from helicopters Friday onto the roof of a Jewish center in Mumbai where Muslim militants were holed up, possibly with hostages, as sharpshooters kept up a steady stream of fire at the five-story building.

The assault was punctuated by gunshots and explosions from within the building as the forces cleared the building floor-by floor. Elsewhere in the city, commandos scoured two luxury hotels for suspected Muslim attackers still holed up more than a day after a chain of attacks across India's financial center by the militants left at least 119 people dead.

Hundreds of people had been captive in the two hotels, many locking themselves in their rooms or trying to hide as the gunmen roamed the buildings.

One victim was British-Cypriot Andreas Dionysiou Liveras, 73, the owner of a luxury yacht business, said the Cypriot foreign ministry and his brother, Theophanis Liveras.

Andreas Dionysiou Liveras, who was attending a conference, had spoken to the British Broadcasting Corp. from a locked room inside the Taj Hotel before he was killed.

"As we sat at the table we heard the machine gun fire outside in the corridor. We hid under the table and then they switched all the lights off. ... All we know is the bombs are next door and the hotel is shaking every time a bomb goes off," he said.

Thai army chief calls for elections to end crisis

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP)—Thailand's army commander urged protesters Wednesday to leave Bangkok airport and called for elections to end the country's political crisis after a day of chaos in which thousands of travelers were stranded.

All flights were canceled and frustrated passengers bused to hotels, as protesters shut down Suvarnabhumi Airport in a major escalation of their four-month campaign to oust the prime minister.

"The government should give the public a chance to decide in a fresh election," Gen. Anupong Paochinda said at a news conference after meeting with high-level government officials, academics, economists and security officials.

Suriyasai Katasila, a spokesman for the protesters, said the group would not abide by the army chief's plea to leave the country's international airport.

"Right now, our demand remains the same. If the government does not quit, we will not quit," he said.

Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat returned to Thailand on Wednesday from a summit in Peru, but there was no immediate response from the government to the army chief's call for new elections.

By late afternoon, most of the 4,000 travelers, some who had been camped out since the night before, had left, a Thai tourism official said.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Afghan police: 4 dead in blast near US Embassy

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—A suicide car bomber targeting a convoy of foreign troops exploded about 200 yards (meters) outside the U.S. Embassy in Kabul on Thursday, killing at least four Afghan bystanders as people entered the compound for a Thanksgiving Day race. At least 18 others were wounded in the morning attack, said Abdullah Fahim, a health ministry spokesman. Police officer Abdul Manan said the explosion was set off by a suicide bomber in a Toyota Corolla. No U.S. Embassy personnel were killed or injured in the blast, an embassy statement said. The Interior Ministry said the bombing targeted a convoy of foreign troops but it had no additional information. The blast happened on the last day of a visit by a United Nations Security Council delegation. The U.N. had warned its staff in Afghanistan of possible terrorist attacks coinciding with the visit.

Winter of hunger looms in Afghanistan

NILI, Afghanistan (AP)—The farmer squats barefoot on packed earth in front of his two-room mud house. He has looked at his bags of wheat, he says, and counted the days. Ghulam Sakhi, 50, says his family will run out of food in mid-January—only a third of the way through Afghanistan's frigid winter. As the days shorten and the nights grow colder, this winter threatens to be Afghanistan's most desperate in nearly two decades. Life has always been hard in this poor, war-ravaged land, but this year a combination of drought, high food prices and Taliban attacks on supply routes could leave a bigger shortage than emergency food aid can cover. In a country already struggling to combat a strengthening Taliban insurgency, it's a crisis that is testing an overstretched government's limits.

World

Clues point to domestic terrorists in India attack

LONDON (AP)—The attack on India's financial capital bears all the trademarks of al-Qaida—simultaneous assaults meant to kill scores of Westerners in iconic buildings—but clues so far point to homegrown Indian terrorists, global intelligence officials said Thursday.

Spy agencies around the world were caught off guard by the deadly attack, in which gunmen sprayed crowds with bullets, torched landmark hotels and took dozens of hostages.

"We have been actively monitoring plots in Britain and abroad and there was nothing to indicate something like this was about to happen," a British security official told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of his work.

Britain is the former colonial power in India and Pakistan and closely monitors terrorist suspects in those countries.

In some ways, the attack illustrated just how fluid terror tactics have become since Sept. 11—and how the threat has become more global. Al-Qaida's leaders on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border still provide inspiration but groups are becoming increasingly local.

The group that claimed responsibility, Deccan Mujahideen, was unknown to global security officials. The name suggested the group was Indian.

One of the suspects reportedly called an Indian television station, speaking the main Pakistani language of Urdu, to demand the return of Muslim lands. That was a reference to Kashmir, territory claimed by both India and Pakistan.

But Ajai Sahni, head of the New Delhi-based Institute for Conflict Management who has close ties to India's police and intelligence, said the attack was a departure from past assaults waged over Kashmir. Other such attacks had targeted Indian legislators, not Westerners.

Security officials said it was too soon to make a connection to Pakistan.

"It would be premature ... to reach any hard-and-fast conclusions on who may be responsible for the attacks, but some of what we're seeing is reminiscent of past terrorist operations undertaken by groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed," a U.S. counterterrorism official said on condition of anonymity, referring to Pakistani militant groups linked to al-Qaida who have fought Indian troops in Kashmir.

Iraqi parliament OKs US troops for 3 more years

BAGHDAD (AP)—The long, costly story of American military involvement in Iraq moved closer to an end Thursday when Iraq's parliament approved a pact that requires all troops to be out in three years, marking the first clear timetable for a U.S. exit since the 2003 invasion that ousted Saddam Hussein.

The vote for the security deal followed months of tough talks between U.S. and Iraqi negotiators that at times seemed on the point of collapse, and then days of hardscrabble dealmaking between ethnic and sectarian groups whose centuries-old rifts had hardened during the first four years of the war.

The war has claimed more than 4,200 American lives and killed a far greater, untold number of Iraqis, consumed huge reserves of money and resources and eroded the global stature of the United States, even among its closest allies.

Now an end is in sight, and American troops could leave sooner if President-elect Barack Obama makes good on a plan to pull out combat troops within 16 months of moving into the White House in January.

Some troops are likely to redeploy to face an insurgency that has expanded in Afghanistan even as attacks have diminished in Iraq, where the U.S. believes Iraqi forces are better able to fend for themselves. The terms of the security pact reflect that confidence: U.S. forces will withdraw from Iraqi towns and cities by June 30 and the entire country by Jan. 1, 2012.

"This is a historic day for the great Iraqi people," Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki said in a 10-minute address on national television. "We have achieved one of its most important achievements in approving the agreement on the withdrawal of foreign forces from Iraq and restoring the sovereignty it lost two decades ago."

WORLD BRIEFS

Russian president visits Cold War ally Cuba

HAVANA (AP)—Russia's president visited old Cold War ally Cuba on Thursday after meeting with his nation's new friends in Latin America in a tour aimed at reviving relationships that have frayed since the Soviet Union's collapse. Dmitry Medvedev arrived in Havana from Venezuela, where he met with socialist President Hugo Chavez and agreed to help the oil-rich South American country start a nuclear energy program. Russian officials deny that Medvedev's trip to Latin America—traditionally considered in the U.S. sphere of influence—is meant to provoke the United States, but the voyage included meetings with Washington's staunchest opponents in the region. In Havana, Medvedev was greeted by Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque and Ricardo Cabrisas, the island's chief of foreign trade and investment. He was immediately sped away in a limousine without addressing reporters.

Pope may visit Holy Land next year

VATICAN CITY (AP)—Pope Benedict XVI may visit the Holy Land next year, the Vatican spokesman said Thursday. Benedict, who has expressed his desire to visit the Holy Land, has a long-standing invitation from Israel. But a tax dispute and other issues have so far prevented a visit, and the two sides are also at odds over the conduct of wartime Pope Pius XII. A trip to the area would be expected to include a visit to the Palestinian territories. The Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi said Thursday that "diplomatic contacts are under way to study the possibility of a visit by the Holy Father to the Holy Land next year." Lombardi declined to comment on any possible dates, saying contacts were still at an early stage. The office of Israeli President Shimon Peres also said the two sides were working on the issue, with no dates set.

Israel's Livni calls on Olmert to step down

JERUSALEM (AP)—Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni on Thursday called on the country's embattled prime minister to step down immediately in light of growing signs that he will soon be indicted on corruption charges. The announcement came a day after Israel's attorney general said he was considering filing charges against Prime Minister Ehud Olmert for allegedly double billing Jewish groups for trips abroad. He wants Olmert to appear at a special hearing before making a final decision on whether to prosecute and put Olmert on trial. Olmert has already said that he will step down after elections scheduled in February. But at a meeting of the ruling Kadima party Thursday, Livni said he should go before that. His departure would clear the way for Livni to become acting prime minister until the election.

Maharlika

PINOY LIFE IN THE MARIANAS

Saturday, November 29, 2008

Filipino hurt in Mumbai attack—DFA

4 others evacuated to safety

By VERONICA UY
INQUIRER.NET

MANILA, Philippines—A Filipino, who was visiting Mumbai in India on business, sustained minor injuries during the attack on Oberoi, one of the hotels seized by terrorists there, the Department of Foreign Affairs said Thursday.

DFA spokesman Claro Cristobal said the Filipino was one of five confirmed to have been affected by the terrorist attacks in India's main financial district late Wednesday night.

Cristobal said the other two, who worked at the Tiffen Restaurant of the Oberoi Hotel, have been evacuated to safety. Their wives, who are also Filipinos, are safe and billeted in another hotel, he added.

Cristobal said he could not release the names of the five Filipinos until their families here have been informed.

He said the Philippine embassy in New Delhi and the honorary consulate general in Mumbai have maintained contact with the five Filipinos and would be provided assistance as needed.

In an interview from overseas with INQUIRER.net, Maria Bugarin, deputy chief of mission at the embassy, said there were about 90 Filipinos registered with the consulate general covering the states of Goa, Maharashtra, and Gujarat.

Mumbai, formerly Bombay, is the capital of Maharashtra and the financial capital of India.

Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs Esteban Conejos had said that no Filipinos were victims of the attacks.

Bugarin said that aside from the local police, the information the embassy received was from the Filipino community in the Greater Mumbai area whose members number between 30 and 35. She said most of the Filipinos there were married to Indian nationals.

"The information is from their colleagues as well," she said.

"We are closely in touch with them through their mobile phones," she added.

The embassy also said the flights to Mumbai have been cancelled due to the terror attacks.

Bugarin advised all Filipinos in India to be more careful and to provide any information about other Filipinos who might have fallen victim during the attacks.

She said the local police could not confirm the nationalities of the foreigners who were killed.

Cristobal said there were about 520 Filipinos in the entire India.

800 Pinoys stranded at Bangkok airport

By NOEL ADLAI O. VELASCO
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BANGKOK—At least 800 Filipinos were still stranded at Thailand's main international airport here as their flights to Manila remained canceled Thursday, two days after anti-government protesters seeking to oust Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat stormed and occupied the terminal.

Philippine Airlines personnel at the Suvarnabhumi International Airport told the Philippine Daily Inquirer that all PAL flights were still canceled until further notice. Another Philippine airline, Cebu Pacific, said it had canceled all flights from Bangkok until Nov. 30, its agents in the capital said.

Thai Airways also canceled its flights from Manila to Bangkok.

The stranded passengers had to stay in hotels at their own expense.

In Manila, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said Thursday night that the Philippine Embassy in Bangkok had been assisting the stranded travelers.

Earlier, it advised Filipinos against nonessential travel to Thailand as recommended by the embassy for their safety and convenience.

Those already in Thailand should contact the embassy for help, said the DFA's spokesperson, Assistant Secretary Claro Cristobal.

OFW absentee voters' registration moved

By VERONICA UY
INQUIRER.NET

MANILA, Philippines—The start of the registration for absentee voting by overseas Filipinos was reset to Feb. 1, 2009 from December 2, Elections Commissioner Nicodemo Ferrer told INQUIRER.net Thursday.

Ferrer said the Commission on Elections en banc passed a resolution on November 25 moving the starting date of the OAV registration two months later because the data capturing machines have not been delivered to some foreign posts.

"We have to reallocate the data capturing machines to the foreign posts that need replacements of defective DCMs either from Manila or from foreign posts with excess DCMs," he said.

The registration date for OAV will thus be shortened from the originalnine months (December 2008 to August 2009) to seven months (Feb. 2, 2009 to Aug. 31, 2009).

Ferrer, who oversees the OAV for the poll body, said that even with the shortened registration period, the Comelec was still targeting to register an aggregate one million OAV voters.

"That target is not going to be easy to achieve. But hopefully, we will succeed because it will be a national election that would include choosing a president and a vice president," he said.

'Mang Ben' to continue his love of art in Guam

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
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REPORTER

He is leaving the island for good but the memories of Saipan would always inspire him to continue his passion for painting.

Self-taught artist Benjamin Ganapin Jr. is scheduled to leave for Guam tomorrow, Nov. 30, for a new job, where he sees himself continuing a hobby that has become a passion for this outgoing accountant of Grace Christian Academy.

In a visit to his office a few days ago, Ganapin related how he became hooked on painting and gave some advice to budding artists.

Though he discovered his artistic bent in high school, this Filipino overseas worker became more serious with his craft after joining the Flame Tree Festival as a newcomer on Saipan in 2006. Of the 33 paintings he displayed during the festival, he sold 29 pieces.

NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.

Guam-bound local artist Benjamin "Mang Ben" Ganapin Jr. and wife Kate show off three of his latest work.

"As of now, I have about 100 paintings already," said the 30-year-old native of Pampanga, who uses the name "Mang Ben" as his signature for all his works.

Why Mang Ben? He said he chose that to convey what he would become in the future.

"I know I will become old and when that time comes, those people who have my works, most of them my own friends, will say, 'This one is by Mang Ben,'" he explained.

After his first participation in the Flame Tree Festival, Mang Ben donated the money he earned from the paintings to a church in his hometown.

For him, painting is just a hobby—maybe an expensive one—but at the same time there are rewards and he is sure he would continue to paint even in Guam.

For Mang Ben, every work of art matters. He said art reflects one's orientation and all you need is to develop it into something positive.

Quoting Picasso, he said "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up."

So he makes it a point to work with young people especially students of GCA in their art classes, where his wife Kate is a teacher. (The couple has a 3-month old child, Daniel Jamin.)

He is also a frequent resource person for some Commonwealth Council of Arts and Culture activities.

His advice for the young artists in the CNMI? To continue exploring new things. To be a good artist, all you need is a little patience.

"Art is a good venue to become disciplined citizens. They just need to continue to be creative. They must continue to preserve the culture of this beautiful island," he said.

Some of Mang Ben's works will be displayed and sold during the upcoming annual art exhibit at the CCAC office beginning Dec. 1.

His forte is metallic paint, which is relatively new here on Saipan. His latest piece is a façade of the old lighthouse in Garapan and a view of Bird Island.

LABOR FRONT

Labor's referral service

By FERDIE PONCE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Q: What does the Department of Labor's referral service mean to workers?

A: The Labor's Employment Services provides a referral service for citizens, residents, and alien workers located in the CNMI. According to Labor, this service shall match information about prospective employees with information about job vacancies so that private sector jobs may be filled expeditiously with qualified persons who are willing and able to do the work required by the employer.

Citizens, permanent residents, and foreign national workers may register with Labor's Employment Services for assistance in finding employment in the CNMI. According to the Alien Labor Rules and Regulations, registrants shall complete a standard form for registration online or in writing. Registered applicants may post resumes on Labor's website.

■ ■ ■

Q: What are the other services provided by the Labor's Employment Services?

A: Labor's Employment Services will provide orientation materials to help applicants with job applications and interviews and with referrals to other agencies that provide related assistance.

Employment Services will catalog and evaluate the skills, qualifications, and interests of applicants seeking employment in order to be able to match applicants with job vacancy announcements.

For jobs with a legitimate requirement for fluency in a foreign language, Employment Services will evaluate oral foreign language skills through the use of standard conversational tests administered by translators employed or contracted by Labor. Employment Services will evaluate written foreign language skills through the use of standard written tests administered by translators employed or contracted by Labor.

■ ■ ■

Q: Does Labor's Employment Services maintain a referral list?

A: Yes. Employment Services maintains a current list of all persons who have registered within the past six months and who have not yet become employed. With respect to each job vacancy announcement, Employment Services shall determine whether any person on the Referral List is qualified for the vacancy. Labor says if candidates are available from the Referral List, a suitable number of qualified candidates will be referred to the employer within five working days after receipt of the proposed job vacancy announcement.

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6 cops shot, 5 buses burned in terminal

By YOLANDA SOTELO-FUERTES, GABRIEL CARDINOZA
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

LINGAYEN, PANGASINAN—Victory Liner Bus terminal security guard Romeo Mercullo had looked forward to another ordinary and routine night shift on Wednesday.

Like in previous nights, passengers catching the midnight trip from this Pangasinan capital to Metro Manila would approach him to ask what time the first trip would depart.

But shortly before midnight on Wednesday, while talking to another security guard, Ruel Modelo, Mercullo saw three men walking toward the terminal on Avenida Street in Barangay Poblacion here.

"The first man asked me, 'Boss, may I ask a question?' I told him, 'What is it, Sir?' Then he held me and told me not to fight back," Mercullo said in a local radio interview.

It was then, Mercullo said, that the man grabbed his service firearm and pushed him to the back of the terminal.

A few minutes later, shots were heard and almost simultaneously, five buses burst into flames.

When the smoke had cleared, six policemen were wounded. A bus conductor who was sleeping inside one of the buses suffered burns.

Supt. Harris Fama, town police chief, identified the wounded policemen as PO3 Daniel Sison, PO3 Alex de Guzman, PO2 Reynaldo Domalanta, PO1 Herman Camba, PO1 Armeno Abarabar and PO1 Ramon Valencerina.

Fama said the armed men fired at the policemen as soon as their patrol car reached the terminal.

"We did not know where the [bullets] were coming from. The suspects seemed to be posted inside the terminal," PO1 Benito Soriano said in an interview over Aksyon Radyo here.

Soriano said they did not fire back because "we might hit some bystanders so we just took cover."

Victory Liner inspector Reynaldo Garcia said bus conductor Villaflor Moyano, 40, of Sta. Cruz, Zambales, suffered third degree burns when he failed to immediately get out of the burning bus.

A bus driver, who was sleeping in one of the parked buses, said he was roused from his sleep when he heard somebody yelling, "Get out, get out!"

The driver said the man poured gasoline on the bus. In a few minutes, he heard gunshots.

Senior Supt. Percival Barba, Pangasinan police director, said investigators are looking at all possible angles.

"We are not disregarding all possible motives. We are looking at a possible labor dispute or this could be a foiled armed robbery," Barba said.

He said an investigator had been sent to Quezon City to compare the attack to the burning of buses at the Victory Liner bus terminal in Cubao six months ago.

Barba said six of the eight policemen who went to the terminal were hit because they were in the middle of the road in front of the terminal.

"Their enemies were positioned near the wall, inside the terminal. If you look at it, our policemen were in a bad position because they were in the middle of the road, vulnerable to attack," Barba said.

He said the armed men escaped in two vehicles and there might have been 10 of them.

Impeach raps to plenary next Tuesday

MANILA, Philippines—After voting the fourth impeachment complaint against President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo insufficient in substance on Wednesday, the House justice committee is expected to bring it next week before the plenary, according to its chairman.

In the plenary, the complaint could either be buried with finality or be revived if it gets the backing of at least 80 lawmakers, or one-third of the House membership.

AP

Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, center, descends an airport escalator with Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, left, and Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez upon arrival late Thursday, Nov. 27, 2008, in Manila, Philippines, from the APEC Summit in Peru.

Representative Matias Defensor said his committee will have the report ready for submission to the plenary by December 2.

At a news forum in Quezon City, Sorsogon Representative Jose Solis said the complaint "is not yet completely dead" and still has a chance of going to trial in the Senate if it gets the one-third vote in the plenary.

He said Pangasinan Representative Jose de Venecia Jr., the former Speaker, could try to get support from lawmakers loyal to him to gather the required number.

However, at the same forum, Defensor said he doubts if the pro-impeachment lawmakers could get 80 votes.

"They cannot get the 79 or 80, not only because of numbers, but because we will put out a very strong argument," he said.

At most, he said only about 25 to 30 solons will support the complaint.

Reacting to this, Bayan Muna (People First) party list Representative Teodoro Casiño, one of the endorsers of the complaint, said, "He sounds so confident, as if they have everyone in their pocket."

"I'm speaking figuratively, of course," Casiño added.

Representative Satur Ocampo of Bayan Muna said gunning for the 80 votes "may be wishful thinking, but we hope to gain at least some independent-minded ones to our side." ***(INQUIRER.net)***

Malaysia to pull peacekeepers from RP

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—Malaysia will withdraw all its peacekeepers from the southern Philippines this month, the foreign minister said Thursday, signaling frustration with stalled talks between Manila and Muslim rebels.

Malaysia began withdrawing 40 cease-fire monitors from violence-scarred Mindanao island in April because of a lack of progress in peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Manila suspended the talks altogether in August after three guerrilla commanders went on a bloody rampage, killing dozens in predominantly Christian communities.

The 12 Malaysians still working with the cease-fire monitoring team will pull out when the current peacekeeping mandate ends Nov. 30, Foreign Minister Rais Yatim said in a statement. The team also includes military and nonmilitary personnel from Brunei, Libya and Japan.

"Malaysia is prepared to consider its future participation ... when there is progress in the peace process and a formal request is made" by both sides, Rais said.

"Malaysia remains supportive of the peace process," he said.

The statement did not say whether Malaysia will continue to broker peace talks between the Philippine government and the Muslim insurgents, who have been battling for decades for self-rule in the south of the predominantly Roman Catholic country.

The peacekeeping team has been credited with easing violent clashes. Under a 2003 cease-fire, clashes have dropped from up to 700 a year to 15 last year.

Philippine peace process adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said his government formally appealed to Malaysia on Tuesday to extend the monitors' mandate.

However, Philippine armed forces chief Gen. Alexander Yano said he did not think the Malaysian withdrawal would have "any substantial effect" because the government and the rebels were cooperating in a committee aimed at reviving the cease-fire.

Rebel chief negotiator Mohagher Iqbal said his group was not recommending an extension of the Malaysian peacekeepers' mandate, and accused Manila of neglecting the monitors.

AP

FLOODED VILLAGES
Residents wade along floodwaters in Camunatan village, Ilagan town, Isabela province, northern Philippines. A week of pounding rain has flooded about 200 farming villages in the northern Philippines, leaving six people dead and four others missing, police said.

Philippines charge suspected bombers

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Philippine police charged three bombing suspects with terrorism, a prosecutor said Thursday—the first time authorities have relied on a new law that mandates excessive fines for improper detention.

Three members of the Al Khobar group were charged with violating the Human Security Act for their alleged involvement in a bombing that injured seven people last May in Midsayap township in southern Northern Cotabato province, state prosecutor Al Calica said.

Al Khobar is a known extortion gang. It is not specifically linked to any militant group in the volatile southern Philippines, which has been riven by a Muslim separatist rebellion for decades.

The three suspects remain at large and will be hunted down once the court in Midsayap issues arrest warrants, Calica said.

Justice Undersecretary Ricardo Blancaflor said the case would serve as a test case for the anti-terror law.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, a key backer of the U.S.-led global war on terrorism, signed the law in July 2007 to bolster the campaign against al-Qaida-linked militants, particularly in the south.

The law defines terrorism as any of at least 12 violent crimes, including rebellion, bombings, murder and kidnappings for ransom, that cause widespread fear and are designed to force the government to give in to an unlawful demand.

The Midsayap bombing stirred public fear and anger. The militants demanded a monthly payment of 100,000 pesos ($2,000) from the local government to spare the town from bombings—two elements police should prove before they can declare a crime an act of terrorism, Calica said.

Many law enforcers have been wary of trying for convictions under the anti-terror law because of a 500,000 peso ($10,200) fine that can be imposed on individual officers for each day of wrongful detention, Calica said. The fine is intended as a safeguard against police abuses.

Police have instead charged terror suspects with common crimes like murder, he said.

RP growth more than expected; peso rallies

By MICHELLE REMO, DORIS DUMLAO
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

The Philippine economy grew 4.6 percent in the third quarter, according to data the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) released Thursday—slowing down from a 7.1-percent growth in the same period in 2007 but at the high end of the 3.8-4.6 percent estimate of the National Economic and Development Authority for the quarter.

"The Philippine economy has been damaged but not quite ravaged by the global financial turmoil and high oil prices," the NSCB said in a statement.

The peso, partly aided by a higher-than-expected growth in the gross domestic product (GDP) and weak demand for foreign exchange, rallied back to the 48-per-dollar level for the first time in three weeks and closed at the day's high of 48.80 to the dollar.

The peso rose also on upbeat stock market trading across the region and the influx of overseas Filipinos' foreign exchange remittances ahead of the Christmas season.

Other Asian currencies also strengthened against the US dollar on buoyant stock markets although jitters over a deadly blast in India and political turmoil in Thailand tempered their gains. In the Philippines, the stock market rose by 1.8 percent to close at 1,967.01.

"But even without the GDP [report], the peso would have appreciated because when there's no demand [for foreign exchange], inflows will drive the market," said Jose Emmanuel Hilado, treasurer at Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.

Since the start of the year, the peso has depreciated by 15.4 percent against the US dollar, compared with a 19-percent appreciation in 2007 that made it the region's best-performing currency.

Decent growth

The NSCB said "the decent growth in GDP drew on the strong performances of manufacturing, construction and trade. On the demand side, household spending led the growth."

Third-quarter numbers brought the GDP growth for the first three quarters of 2008 to an average of 4.6 percent, NSCB secretary general Romulo Virola said at a press conference.

The gross national product (GNP), which includes income from abroad like remittances from overseas Filipinos, grew 6.5 percent in the third quarter, decelerating from 9.1 percent in the same period last year.

For the full year, the government expects the economy to grow 4.1-4.8 percent this year and 3.7- 4.7 percent in 2009.

The International Monetary Fund has cut its 2008 growth forecast for the Philippines to 4.4 percent from 5.2 percent earlier this year.

Of the economy's three major sectors, only industry recorded faster growth. It grew 7.1 percent in the third quarter from 6.6 percent in the same period a year ago. Growth in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector slowed to 2.5 percent from 5.7 percent, while the services sector's expansion decelerated to 3.7 percent from 8 percent.

The industry sector was boosted largely by the construction subsector, which grew 15.8 percent, slightly lower than 16.8 percent in the same period last year.

Officials said construction was supported by the government's move to increase spending on infrastructure, which was aimed at pump-priming the economy amid a global slowdown.

Compensation income earned by overseas Filipino workers amounted to P270.6 billion in the third quarter, up 40 percent from P192.3 billion in the same period last year.

This was credited partly for the 4.6-percent growth in personal consumption, which the NSCB said was still encouraging although it was slower than the 5.7 percent in the third quarter of 2007.

Despite the slower growth in the third quarter, Economic Planning Secretary Ralph Recto said the figure was still decent and in fact made the Philippines outperform its neighbors, citing the third-quarter growth rates of Taiwan (1.0 percent), Malaysia (4.2 percent), Thailand (4 percent), South Korea (4.0 percent) and Hong Kong (1.7 percent). Indonesia posted a 6.1-percent GDP growth in the third quarter.

"The growth in the third quarter was aided by the aggressive push of government in public construction, both on the national and the local levels," Recto said.

Public infrastructure spending focused mostly on accelerating projects that have been delayed.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said the government would continue spending heavily on infrastructure to help ensure a decent growth despite the global financial crisis.

The peso's path

The peso had sharply depreciated in the past few days, hitting as low as 50.17 to the dollar on heightened risk aversion across global markets.

Central bank data showed outflows of foreign investments in Philippine stocks and bonds persisted in the first two weeks of November, amounting to $379.0 million after reaching $389.98 million in October.

Since the start of the year, the central bank has recorded net outflows of foreign portfolio investments totaling $1.29 billion, a reversal of $3.82 billion in net inflows in the same period last year.

Jonathan Ravelas, chief strategist at Banco de Oro Unibank, said a yearend rally of the peso toward 46 to the dollar might still be possible with strong remittance flows.

For next year, he projected a wide trading range of 43-52 to the dollar.

AP

Activists wear masks as they hold slogans during a rally against a proposed Charter Change outside the House of Representatives in suburban Quezon City, north of Manila, Philippines on Tuesday Nov. 25, 2008. Congress Tuesday opened hearings on a proposal to amend the constitution which the opposition claims President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo will use to extend her term after it expires in 2010.

Google translates websites to Tagalog

By LAWRENCE CASIRAYA
INQUIRER.NET

ANGELES CITY, Pampanga—That website sounds Greek to you? A new service by Google promises to translate it to Tagalog.

The service can translate any website written in 34 languages to Tagalog, according to Google's announcement.

The Philippines is the first country in Southeast Asia to get access to this free service, Google said.

Users can go to http://translate.google.com.ph, cut and paste original text from a website—including Chinese characters, for example, and then translate it to either English or Tagalog.

It also allows users to search for Tagalog keywords in foreign-language webpages automatically translated into Tagalog.

Included in Google's suite of translation tools is a widget that can be placed in a website containing text in Tagalog. When clicked, it translates text into any of the 34 languages available.

The service also allows Filipinos to contribute to improve translation capabilities further.

"When users come across an inaccurate translation, the tool allows them to suggest a better translation than the machine translation," said Derek Callow, Google marketing head for South Asia, in a statement.

PERSONAL FINANCE

Why we spend the way we spend

By MA. SALVE DUPLITO
INQUIRER.NET

Have you ever wondered why you sometimes skimp on restaurant meals or deprive yourself of your usual airplane model hobby purchases, and then all of a sudden buy a new leather bag or pair of shoes—just like that?

The urge to splurge can hit quick and fast during unguarded moments and before you know it, the trying-hard-to-be-frugal guy is separated with his money quicker than anything you have ever seen. These moments of irrational spending may or may not be major enough to cause deep dents in financial plans, but understanding why they happen—and when they normally do—will help you prevent the next one.

Drazen Prelec, associate professor of marketing at the Sloan School of Management, says in a study that "people's complex behaviors towards money defy economic theory."

For example, some buy lotto tickets habitually and invest in insurance at the same time. What's the big deal about that? Buying lotto is risky behavior while insurance shows risk-averse behavior.

While Prelec's findings are used mainly by marketing companies to improve shopping conditions to make consumers buy more, they provide fascinating insights on how people's relationships with money really are very complex.

One of his findings is that we all have personal rules when it comes to spending—rules that we think will keep us out of money trouble. One example would be never to buy an item if it's not on sale. When we don't live by the rules, we feel guilty. That guilt is what he calls a moral tax on consumption, which interferes with the pleasures that we get from buying what we buy.

Marketers take advantage of these findings by offering bundled pricing. A home theater system may have additional high-definition television cables included in the package and a set of speakers, plus a table. The cables and table may not be free, but you will feel better purchasing the entire set.

Credit cards, he says, are "insidious" when people don't understand how they work, because they remove the pain of that moral tax or make it appear that the pain is not there. A separate study has shown that most people who pay with plastic tend to spend more than their budget.

Money, wellbeing and success

It is no secret that people associate success, happiness, contentment, and status with what they have, the brand of clothes they wear, where they shop, the size of their homes, or the kinds of car they drive.

Some have what would seem like less selfish or shallow reasons for spending: making children or spouses happy, or keeping relatives and friends close.

With the boom of the consumer economy and the creation of factories and plants all over the world that create anything from toys to home decors, we never run out of things to buy but most often find that happiness and contentment remain elusive.

Studies on the psychology of spending shows that culture is now easily determined simply by measuring what sells and the average consumer, bombarded by choices, finds himself first knee-deep and then neck-deep in consumer debt and headlong into a jungle of consumerism-driven race in status.

This becomes more complicated when parents who try to fit into society by adjusting to the income brackets of people two or more notches above them, unwittingly send signals to children, who in the end wants the same PSP or mobile phone accessory that their classmates and friends have.

How to fight the urge to splurge

Understanding how or why we spend means we have to look into whether we fall prey to the contrived psychological triggers that marketers cook up to remove the rationality in our spending.

Augustus J.V. Ferreria, a registered financial planner, is an expert on heuristics where he analyses people's spending patterns and customizes their financial plans based on his analyses. He recommends bringing a little notebook with you or using your mobile phone to jot down for a month anything that you buy—from gum to Spam—and what time. He says you will find patterns of spending you haven't noticed about yourself. That should show you why you spend the way you do, and alert you to triggers.

Some triggers you should watch out for are emotional, like loneliness from being away from home or fights with loved ones, advertisements, holidays and special occasions, sale season, and promotions at work. The list is endless.

After all, there's always a reason to spend if you want to find that reason. Taking control of your money will not happen by magic; it will require conscious choice.

For more personal finance article, visit INQUIRER.net's MoneySmarts at http://blogs.inquirer.net/moneysmarts.

Maharlika – PinoyStyle

Dyslexic, driven Regine

By GERRY PLAZA
INQUIRER.NET

MANILA, Philippines—She can be utterly rowdy, incredibly expressive, yet downright engaging. But when chatting with "Asia's Songbird" Regine Velasquez, it comes as a pleasant surprise that she remains the simple province-bred lass who emerged as RPN-9's "Bagong Kampeon" winner in 1984.

Yes, she doesn't forget her roots, the family she always worked hard for, and the dreams she always had for them, now grandly realized with 22 years of phenomenal success in music recording, movies and, now, being the current toast of telenovela fare.

But through it all, she has this particular loathing for "change." Change, she qualifies, that would make her somebody different from the Chona Velasquez that townsfolk from Balagtas, Bulacan always knew.

"Success should not change you," Regine tells INQUIRER.net in an exclusive interview. "Dapat kung ano yung na-e-experience mo within the business that should improve your personality. If the business changes you, yan yung mga sinasabing lumalaki yung ulo. Iba yun parang nakakahilo yun."

Looking back, Regine would not look at the several gold or platinum records she earned, the sold-out concerts she headlined, the movies that were box-office blockbusters, or the television shows that rated high as her biggest accomplishment.

Struggles

"I was able to help my family. Kasi yun ang nasa isip ko noon eh. My family. Kasi we were very poor. So nung kumakanta na ako, parang it made life easier for us. Since then nakita ko na yung parents ko na hindi na nahihirapan. May struggle na ako, bata pa lang ako," she says.

The struggle, Regine says, was taking the load off an ailing father, Gerry, to earn a living for the family at a very young age.

"Kasi yung tatay ko, he found it hard to provide for the family. Sira na yung katawan niya kasi he had a bad scoliosis. So I kinda promised myself na I don't want to see my father working na ganyan ang condition niya. Gusto ko ako na. Parang kinuha ko na yun. Although they didn't ask me, parang kinuha ko na yung responsibility."

But even when she had faced that gargantuan task of being the sole breadwinner, Regine says she loved and enjoyed it.

"Yung binigay na talent sa akin I happen to love very much. I love singing so you know I'm helping my family but in the same time I'm helping myself. I'm making a career out of singing."

'I'm dyslexic'

Not even a childhood learning disability could stop her.

"I'm actually dyslexic. Not a lot of people know," Regine says. "I've had it since birth. I remember when I was younger malabo yung mata ko. Kasi bali-baligtad yung 'v' at 'b' ko. Di naiintindihan ng nanay ko kung ano ang sinusulat ko. I can't spell right. Di ako masyadong magaling mag-spell. Mabagal ako magbasa."

Dyslexia is a disability that impairs sufferers from correctly translating written images into spoken language; a difficulty in processing letters and sounds that results in poor reading and spelling skills. Such disability can afflict even the smartest, most intelligent individuals.

Regine says her being dyslexic made it difficult for her to adapt to a formal school environment when she was a child.

Even now, this disability affects her singing on televised programs, such as "SOP," because it requires learning new songs each week and using a teleprompter, a monitor near the stage wherein lyrics of the song are shown to the performers. Regine says that when she gets distracted, she often loses concentration and sings the wrong lyrics.

"Nilalait nila ako. Wala talaga akong kantang na-perfect. Hirap kasi akong magbasa eh. This is my problem. Kaya dati pa nila ako in-o-offer na hosting job, never ko tinatanggap. Kasi alam ko magbabasa ako. That's my fear kasi alam ko na that's hard. Kasi ang ginagawa ko mine-memorize ko na. So pagkanta, may kahit konti lang na tumawid, mawawala na ako kasi kailangan kong makakatutok ako doon. Otherwise, wala di ko na makakanta," she says.

To address this, Regine says, she learned more about the disabilities by watching TV discussions and documentaries.

"So dati hindi ko alam kung ano yon until I watched 'Oprah' and Discovery Channel. Sabi ko, 'That happened to me.' Sabi ko I'm like that and I remember when I was younger malabo yung mata ko," she adds.

Regine emphasizes that the best way to overcome this defect was to rely on what she calls her razor-sharp memory.

"Actually yung best friend ko sinasabi niya sa akin, since you have a really good memory, yun ang ginagamit ko para ako makabasa ng maayos. Sabi nga niya na-a-amaze din siya kasi nga wala naman nagturo sa akin noon eh. Inisip ko lang, magaling naman ang memory ko so minememorize ko na lang siya," she notes.

Regine said she has learned to cope with the disability and would not consider any immediate remedies.

"Meron na akong coping mechanism. Mahirap ko na yun gamutin especially at my age. Kasi na-a-ayos naman yun eh. You have to go back to square one. Tuturuan mo ulit yung sarili mo. It's hard for me to catch up," she says.

Amazing career

Overcoming the seemingly huge odds poised by this disability, Regine held on to build an amazing career.

While winning the "Bagong Kampeon" competition opened doors for her, the accomplishment wasn't enough to make a mark in the industry. It took more painstaking efforts before finally she got noticed. After a TV guesting in "Penthouse Live" in 1986, however, the singing champion Chona Velasquez transformed into the recording sensation "Regine Velasquez," a name suggested by "Penthouse" host and fellow recording star Martin Nievera.

Martin's ex-wife and "Penthouse Live" co-host Pops Fernandez, who will perform with Regine in the landmark "Divas 4 Divas" concert together with Zsa Zsa Padilla and Kuh Ledesma on December 6 at the Araneta Coliseum, also gave Regine the needed breaks.

"Si Pops naman, isa siya sa mga nag-discover sa akin. Pinakita niya ako sa mga mall shows. Magkasama kami doon. Then naging guest ako sa 'Penthouse'," Regine says.

Since that "Penthouse" performance, talent manager Ronnie Henares charted the early years of her career. Ronnie, she says, expressed his intention to be her manager by sending her a "telegram" in Bulacan. "Promise, telegrama talaga. Wala pa kasi kaming telepono noon," she says.

Velasquez

Breakthrough

Since her "Penthouse" appearance, Regine recorded her first, self-titled album that spawned the hits "Kung Maibabalik Ko Lang," and "Urong Sulong" and became a regular fixture in variety shows, concerts and in bit parts in coming-of-age ensemble films. But, according to her, topping the 1988 Asia Pacific Song Festival in Hong Kong was her first breakthrough.

"Parang nagsimula ako ulit. Kasi before that, parang nobody really knew me. They knew that I could sing pero parang wala lang," she says.

An unforgettable concert at the Folk Arts Theater in 1990 led to what was going to be a phenomenal show biz odyssey.

With "Narito Ako," Regine became a certified star, "Asia's Songbird."

After producing hit album after hit album, including international releases, Regine took the next step by starring in a movie opposite Christopher de Leon in portraying her very first lead role as an unconventional nanny in the 1996 blockbuster hit "Wanted: Perfect Mother." Since then, she became both a bankable recording artist and movie star—a feat rarely seen since Sharon Cuneta in the early 1980s.

Regine ruled record sales and the radio airwaves for such big hits as "You Are My Song" from the "Wanted: Perfect Mother" soundtrack and other theme songs from her blockbuster movies, such as " Ikaw," "Kailangan Ko'y Ikaw," "Pangako," and "Hanggang Ngayon," a duet with her now-boyfriend Ogie Alcasid. Ogie had penned most of her latter hits.

She also appeared on television as host of the musical variety program "SOP," and the defunct talent searches "Star for a Night," "Search for a Star," and "Pinoy Pop Superstar" and the worldwide talent franchise "Celebrity Duets." She also starred in television soaps and dramas, such as "Forever in my Heart," her award-winning performance in "Maala-ala Mo Kaya?" and the recently concluded "Ako si Kim Samsoon."

Handling fame

Since singing George Benson's "In Your Eyes" in the "Bagong Kampeon" finals that catapulted her to fame, how does Regine handle her popularity and success?

"I expect so much from myself. When they say, 'Ang galing mo,' but I know sa sarili ko I could have done better, I'll just say thank you but I know, no, I could have done better," Regine says.

"To accept praises like that, it's okay, wag lang pumunta sa ulo mo. I'm still hard on myself, but I learned to laugh at my mistakes, laugh at myself, and I tell myself na tapos na eh. There's always a next time anyway," she adds.

Above all artists, Regine has the highest respects and admiration for her "Divas 4 Divas" co-performer Kuh Ledesma, who organized the once-in-a-lifetime concert. Regine said Kuh is her idol and inspiration.

'It's Kuh'

"Si Kuh talaga promise. I've watched her perform since her Music and Magic days. Nagsolo na rin siya noon. Sabi ko, ang gara! Kinikilabutan ako pag kumakanta siya. Basta I remember na galing na galing ako sa kanya. Parang iba yung boses niya eh. Ang lamig," she said. "This was before I discovered sina Whitney Houston, even si Barbara Streisand. Siya talaga yung idol ko."

According to Regine, one fateful, "depressing" day in a dressing room in the mid-1990s made her realize that she was making a name for herself in show business. That was because Kuh offered to do a concert with her, which became the sensational "Power of Two" concert on October 1996 at the Music Museum.

"I remember her saying, 'mag-concert tayo.' It was in the (Sunday noontime show) ASAP nasa labas kami ng dressing room. Parang depressed na depressed ako noon. Tapos kinausap ako na, 'mag-concert tayong dalawa' tapos talagang, 'huh? Sure ka? Guest ako?' Sabi niya, 'Hindi ah, back to back.' Kasi parang si Kuh Ledesma ka eh. Kilala mo ba kung sino ka, sabi ko. Parang okay naman ako noon pero she's Kuh Ledesma. Then we had 12 shows. Hanggang ngayon yun pa rin ang isa sa mga pinaka-gusto kong concert at pinaka-naka-enjoy akong concert," she recalls.

Ten years after "Power of Two," Regine celebrated her 20th year in show business with the "Twenty" concert at the Araneta Coliseum.

"I never thought I will truly last that long," she says.

Ogie and George

These events, and her "coming out" to reveal her relationship with singer-songwriter-comedian Ogie Alcasid last year, were also among her key milestones. "It's also a milestone because it changed both of us, personally and professionally."

Aside from Ogie, Regine mentions another important character in her life—her pet shih tzu George, which was a gift from her "SOP" co-host Jaya.

"Parang siya ang nakatulong sa akin ng malaki na makalimutan ko muna ng sandali kung ano yung mga pino-problema ko. I love him so much kaya ganyan na lang ka-importante yan sa akin," Regine says.

After "Divas 4 Divas," which will also hit the road in North America next year, Regine will again appear in yet another primetime drama, "Totoy Bato," opposite Robin Padilla. Her latest album, "Low Key" has reached gold.

Another movie is also in the works.

But will she slow down anytime soon, or "settle down"?

"Hindi pa naman ako sabik," Regine declares.

Maharlika – Opinion

EDITORIAL

Holding her to account

How does the country hold the president, any president, accountable? The death of the fourth impeachment complaint against President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo should make all of us stop and wonder: Is a politically astute president, any president, above the law?

The constitutional immunity from suit a president enjoys was meant to shield the chief executive, deep in affairs of state, from the sometimes consuming distraction of legal challenges. The idea is that, if necessary, legal reckoning will come only after the commander in chief steps down from office. The only exception lies in impeachment, Congress' so-called "terrible sword," which forces a sitting president to answer to both houses of Congress in a partly judicial, partly political process.

The country has unsheathed the sword of impeachment against a sitting president only once, in the breakthrough case of Joseph Estrada, and even then the sword did not fully leave its scabbard. None of the impeachment cases filed against President Arroyo has managed to lift the sword even an inch. Ms Arroyo may be vastly unpopular, but she is unquestionably more politically astute than Estrada.

The result, however, is a staggering setback for our democratic project: When it comes to impeachment, President Arroyo has learned how to game the system.

Her many spokesmen have argued that the President does hold herself accountable to the Filipino people, through the electoral system. This is not exactly true; while Ms Arroyo's previous election victories (twice for the Senate, once for the vice presidency) are beyond dispute, her election as president in her own right in 2004 remains controversial. Indeed, in the wake of revelations made in the "Hello, Garci" scandal and the fertilizer fund scam, a majority of Filipinos now presume her election to be fraudulent. This is the root, or what some analysts call the original sin, of her crisis of legitimacy.

Her many spokesmen have also argued that the President does hold herself accountable to the Filipino people, through her stewardship of the economy. They point to years of consecutive quarterly growth. But the assumption that the market helps legitimize her presidency is easily disproved. Stock prices have collapsed, the peso-dollar rate has deteriorated and the economy has abruptly slowed, so by Malacañang's own logic, these developments damn the President. The Palace's studied silence on this point betrays both the weakness of this legitimacy argument and Malacañang's hypocrisy in using it.

Her many spokesmen have also argued that the President does hold herself accountable to the Filipino people, through the elected officials she works with. Loyal local government officials, in particular, have proved to be a steady source of consolation for her. But as survey after survey has shown, many Filipinos think negatively of the President; there is no necessary connection between a constituency's support for a governor or a mayor and that same constituency's support for the President.

In other words: With the President's crafty refusal to be held to account in any serious form, and with her regularly spending as much as P100 million to buy what former House speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. calls "legal protection," the sword of impeachment turns out to be made of plastic.

It is still possible, of course, that on Tuesday a majority of congressmen will overturn the justice committee's dismissal when the House debates the impeachment complaint in plenary. It won't necessarily be shame at their base servitude to the Palace or newly found courage of conviction that would lead congressmen to do the right thing. They could simply read the signs of an angry electorate, and decide to distance themselves from a deeply unpopular President. In other words, naked self-interest is reason enough to force congressmen to overturn the committee decision.

Holding President Arroyo to account now may cost them in the short term. The upside, however, is that it will place them in better position for 2010.

Philippine Daily Inquirer

Still, I told you so

THERE'S THE RUB

By CONRADO DE QUIROS

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Jesus Dureza can't get it. He's the one who goofed, he says, so why did everybody gang up on his boss?

Well, the nature of his goof, or gaffe, was that he recited an interesting prayer at the start of the Cabinet meeting last Tuesday. It was: "Bless the President, so she will have the forbearance, good health, tolerance to lead this nation up to 2010 and perhaps, who knows, even beyond."

Oppositionists promptly seized on it as an attempt by Malacañang to test the waters, see how the public would react to the possibility of GMA staying past 2010. Or to get the public used to the idea this early so that it would not react exceptionally violently next year when they do push for it. The thought that GMA wants to stay forever has been on the back of the minds of Filipinos still capable of harboring thought. Can you blame the critics for dropping Dureza from, or not seeing him at all in, his statement?

I myself am not surprised that Dureza should suggest it. I am surprised by the other things he suggested. One, that the Cabinet actually prays before starting their meetings. Surely it cannot be to the same God the rest of their countrymen worship, the one believed to be the source of the Ten Commandments who forbade his creatures from lying, cheating and stealing (the vote)? Two, that GMA actually needs forbearance, good health and tolerance to lead her countrymen. Surely forbearance, good health and tolerance are things her countrymen more badly need to endure her? Good health in particular as people are getting sick, or turning into stone, from beholding the visage of the modern-day Medusa.

And three, that GMA would be furious at his prayer. If true, then it confirms what the public has long suspected, which is that in GMA's Cabinet the greatest crime or transgression, for which there is no forgiveness, is to tell the truth. You tell the truth, you deserve to be fired, or suffer a fate worse than death, which is to be lobotomized like Raul Gonzalez.

But joke turns to grim reality, as Mikey Arroyo now threatens to unleash the aptly named Con-ass upon this country. Courtesy of congressmen who relish the taste of whatever it is that clings to their tongues from licking, well, the name of the project says it all. I am not at all surprised too. Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law a full year before his second term ended, and a completely legitimate term at that. The Con-ass is the equivalent of declaring martial law, and I wouldn't be surprised if it carried as well fascistic measures, such as more killings and disappearances in the wake of protests.

For those who still think GMA "won't dare" try to stay on after 2010, look again. What's to stop her from doing so?

She already has all three branches of government in her pocket. She has the Executive to argue for Charter change, she has Congress to initiate it—particularly with Enrile as Senate president and Nograles as House speaker as a result of two coups (and we worry about Antonio Trillanes!)—and she has the Supreme Court, particularly given her powers to name the new justices, to justify it.

The notion that GMA won't dare stay on presumes that she can and will be deterred by law. Whenever has she been deterred by law? Whenever has she been punished for flouting the law? She's already the longest-serving president without having once been voted president. I asked then and I ask now: Why should someone whose term never began worry about when her term would end? Why should someone who has gotten away with murder worry about committing mayhem?

This is one person who has gotten away with the very literal murder of journalists and political activists; this is one person who has gotten away with lying barefacedly before the public, saying she would not run for president because to do so would divide the country; this is one person who has gotten away with plotting with Garci to kidnap a public school teacher who witnessed wholesale cheating in Tawi-Tawi; this is one person who has gotten away with turning the country into one of the most corrupt countries, if not the most corrupt country, in Asia; this is one person who has gotten away with turning the country into a human rights nightmare; this is one person who has gotten away with staying on despite being the most hated ruler after or before Marcos, take your pick. Why shouldn't she think she can get away with staying on till the end of time?

We don't do something about it, we freaking deserve to have her forever. She's already set the wheels turning.

What can I say?

I told you so.

Searching for Andres Bonifacio

LOOKING BACK

By AMBETH OCAMPO

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

A few months back, I received an intriguing text message from Dr. Michael Cullinane of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, who was researching in the Philippine National Archives in Manila. He teased me silly with a "discovery" that I just had to see. Another researcher had stumbled across a document stating that Andres Bonifacio was apprehended on Sept. 29, 1896, shortly after the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution, and brought to the police detachment in the "tranvia" [streetcar] station of Malabon, now a city outside Manila. I pretended to be excited because I didn't want to spoil the fun just yet. However, I don't want to let this "discovery" fool the gullible.

I had come across the same document over a decade ago. It said that "Andres Bonifacio" was carrying a "cedula" [residence tax certificate] with personal number 2492892 (perhaps I should place a bet on this number in this weekend's lotto draw because Sunday, Nov. 30, is Bonifacio Day). The cedula also stated that "Bonifacio" was a native of Tambobo, a resident of Concepcion and 41 years old. His occupation was listed as "formalero" (whatever that means).

There are a number of ways to read this document, but the common thread is that the man was not the Andres Bonifacio of our textbooks. If the cedula is legitimate then we have "Andres Bonifacio" from Malabon apprehended, interrogated and produced by the authorities for "pogi points," or brownie points. If the cedula is a fake, then it was probably used by the real Bonifacio to mislead the police and military who were hot on his trail. If the document is a fake, then that explains how Bonifacio was able to hold rallies in various places where he would tear up his cedula to emphasize his freedom from Spanish oppression.

I am sure there are people out there who will disagree and make a mountain out of a molehill with this stray document in the National Archives. We leave them to their imagination.

The real search for Bonifacio has been done, not by a historian of the Revolution, but by a demographic historian: Dr. Dan Doeppers, now retired from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Doeppers graciously shared his data drawn from the "vecindarios," or residence lists, of Manila's Tondo area that he combed for the years covering 1889 to 1894. We all know that Bonifacio is from Tondo, but he is not the Hero of Tondo (the titled is reserved for Raja Soliman). Doeppers' says that the records do not list any Andres Bonifacio in Tondo during those years. He did find the following:

1. Bernabe Bonifacio, age 36, tailor, married (probable wife Rafaela Uy-Tangco, age 29, "cigarrera," or cigarette maker).

2. Dionisio Bonifacio, age 26 or 36, married, "carrocero" (probable wife Francisca Hilario, age 35, "cigarrera"). The latter had a son named Telesforo Bonifacio, age 6. In another vecindario entry, the same Dionisio Bonifacio's age is given as 35 and his occupation is listed as tendero. He is still married in this document to the same Francisca Hilario age 37, "cigarrera," but now they had two children: Telesforo, age 4, and Marcela, age 3.

3. Geronima Bonifacio, 24, "cigarrera."

You will be amazed at the amount of useless information that Dr Cullinane has for Cebu and Dr. Doeppers for Manila. I can only hope that there are young Filipino historians who will give up the promise of finding some great historical theory and start solid archival work in the Philippine National Archives or better still the archives in Spain and Mexico. It is unfortunate that the Gen-X is separated from their past because of language. I am told that the Instituto Cervantes, the Spanish cultural center in Manila, has record numbers of students who are probably taking Spanish because they can get paid more than English, or should we say American, speakers in call centers. If only a small number of these Spanish proficient Filipinos can start research work in our archives, our past will become relevant to a new generation.

The material from our National Archives makes us ask the question: If Andres Bonifacio cannot be found in the vecindarios of Tondo, where was he all that time? Was he registered in another suburb of Manila? Maybe he was but a temporary resident of Tondo and was not included in the census count? Maybe the person assigned to collect cedula fees from Bonifacio could not find him or was too scared to present a bill? Perhaps the collector pocketed Bonifacio's cedula money? Was the collector delinquent, negligent or both?

The bottom line is that Bonifacio cannot be found in the resident lists for Tondo. If he was indeed a bona fide resident, why was he not enrolled for the head tax among the "naturales" in Tondo? If Bonifacio did not pay his taxes, he did not have a cedula. If he didn't have a cedula, what did he tear up during the famous "Grito de Balintawak," the Cry of Balintawak, or, depending on the book you're reading, the Cry of Pugadlawin?

History is a very slippery discipline because there is always more than one way to see an event. Then there is the added complication of sources. Whether there is a lot or nothing, the documentation is almost always problematic. Old questions when addressed often reveal new answers, yet Bonifacio remains one of the heroes we should know more about but cannot, pending better research to find new materials and renewed investigation of the scant material we have on hand.

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu.

Maharlika – Samu't Sari

GOLDEN THRESHOLD
Shirley Kim celebrated her 50th birthday with a red carpet-theme party last Nov. 21 at the Hibiscus Hall of the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan. Photo above shows Kim with her family on stage.
RAY BELGADO

RAY BELGADO
Shirley Kim poses on the red carpet before the start of her grand 50th birthday party.

Shirley Kim with youngest daughter Leina on the red carpet.
RAY BELGADO

RAY BELGADO
Shirley Kim poses with the ladies of Northern Marianas Badminton Federation and other well-wishers.

BIRTHDAY GIRL REY BELGADO
Mary Angelica A. Cabrera is escorted by her friend, Ralph, during her birthday celebration at the Hibiscus Hall of the Fiesta Resort and Spa Saipan on Nov.

Mary Angelica A. Cabrera celebrates her seventh birthday at the Hibiscus Hall of the Fiesta Resort and Spa Saipan on Nov. 2. She is shown here with her sister, Joan Cabrera.
REY BELGADO

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

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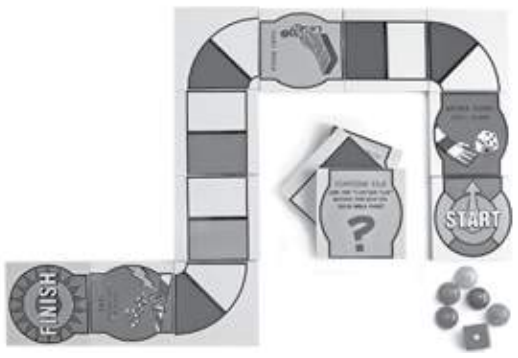
YoungStyle

The best in Toyland



THE WASHINGTON POST

In KidsPost's annual holiday toy test, there was a bumper crop of great games. It's hard to top the comments about Flibbix, from a new company, Merillian Games. You build your own board each time you play Flibbix, so it's always different and lots of fun.

By MARGARET WEBB PRESSLER
(C) 2008, THE WASHINGTON POST

Every year we ask second- through sixth-graders to test about 80 toys before the holiday toy season. We ask them to tell us what they like best, and they always have thoughtful responses.

This year there was a bumper crop of great games. It's hard to top the comments about Flibbix, a game from a new company. "Kids stayed in from recess to play this game," one teacher wrote to us in disbelief. You build your own board each time you play Flibbix, so it's always different—and clearly lots of fun.

Another winning game was one your parents will remember: Operation. It has been released again with more sounds and new objects to pull out of the patient's body—such as a cellphone! Here is the list of all our testers' favorites and a few runners-up.

GAMES

Flibbix (Merillian Games, ages 7-13, $40). In this game you make your own board—and rules! "One of the best board games we have ever played," our fifth-grade testers said.

Operation (Hasbro, 6 and older, $15). Fourth-graders liked playing surgeon and plucking things out of the body. But it's hard. Sound effects (including burping and ringing cellphones) in this updated version of the classic game are loud and giggle-inducing. Bzzzt!

Griddly Headz Baseball Game (Griddly Games Inc., 8-12, $30). Scored a perfect 10 from all testers. "Fun and exciting," a sixth-grader said.

Backseat Drawing (Out of the Box Games, 12 and older, $25). A fast-paced, laugh-a-lot drawing game that sixth-graders called "the coolest," "so much fun" and "the best toy ever."

Bakugan Battle Brawlers Battle Arena (Spin Master, 5 and older, $30, with booster packs starting at $3). A little hard to put together, but the game is "fun," and our fourth-grade testers loved the "cute" and "cool" collectible pieces.

MUSIC/DANCE

High School Musical 3 Rockin' Sing-Along Mic (Zizzle, 6 and older, $13). Third-grade testers loved the music and "that you can sing along." Good fun for the price, but all the testers wanted more than two songs!

U-Dance motion-based TV dance game (Hasbro/Tiger Electronics, 8 and older, $75). One tester said she "likes everything about it," and that pretty much sums up the fifth-graders' reactions.

CRAFTS

Beaded Snowflake Ornaments (Creativity for Kids, 5 and older, $20). The only thing second-graders didn't like about this pretty, fun craft is if you drop it, all the beads can fall off. Oops!

Pixos Super Studio (Spin Master, 8 and older, $30). The second-graders who used this toy to make patterns with beads "loved" it, calling it challenging, cool, creative and easy to use.

Girl Gourmet Cupcake Maker (Jakks Pacific, 8 and older, $30). This toy got a solid 10 rating from fourth-grade testers, who said it was easy to use and made delicious cupcakes.

TECH TOYS

THE WASHINGTON POST

Beaded Snowflake Ornaments from Creativity for Kids. The only thing second-graders didn't like about this pretty, fun craft is if you drop it, all the beads can fall off.

Clone Troopers Learning Laptop (Oregon Scientific, 5 and older, $40). Second-graders said this laptop was "hard to unwrap" but "had great games" and was really fun.

U.B. Funkeys Starter Kit (Mattel/Radica, 8 and older, $20). This kit got a 10 from all fifth-grade testers for being easy to set up and for having great games. "This was just as much fun as an expensive game system for a lot less money," they said.

SPY GEAR

Spy Gear Night Goggles (Wild Planet, 6 and older, $15). Third-grade testers said that being able to see in the dark was fun and that the goggles were easy to use, but some said they "hurt your head."

EyeClops Night Vision infrared stealth goggles (Jakks Pacific, 8 and older, $80). With real infrared night-vision technology, these goggles are pricey but "awesome," sixth-graders pronounced.

THE WASHINGTON POST

Another winning game in KidsPost's annual holiday toy test was one your parents will remember: Operation. Hasbro has released it again with more sounds and new objects, such as a cellphone, to pull out of the patient's body.

Spy Gear Spy Video ATV-360 (Wild Planet, 8 and older, $100). This vehicle transmits real-time video (but no sound) from another room. "I could spy on my sister!" said one fourth-grade tester.

BUILDING

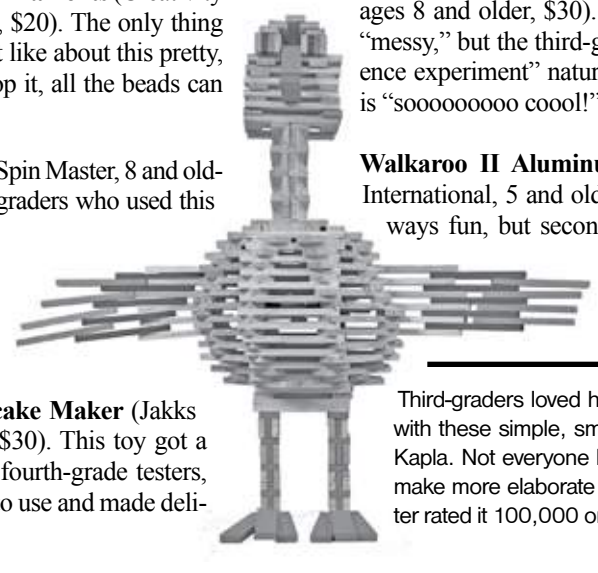
Lego Agents Mobile Command Center (Lego, 8 and older, $90). A much-loved set with a whole lot of pieces (1,154!). Fifth-grade testers said it's not easy, but they all called it "fun."

Kapla building system (Kapla, 3 and older, $30 and up). Third-graders loved how creative you can be with these simple, small building planks. Not everyone liked how hard it was to make more elaborate structures, but one tester rated it 100,000 on a scale of 1 to 10!

RUNNERS-UP

Discovery Kids Tornado Lab (Discovery Kids, ages 8 and older, $30). This toy was slightly "messy," but the third-graders loved the "science experiment" nature of it. And the effect is "sooooooooo coool!"

Walkaroo II Aluminum Stilts (GeoSpace International, 5 and older, $36). Stilts are always fun, but second-graders really liked that this uniquely shaped version is "easy to use."



Third-graders loved how creative you can be with these simple, small building planks from Kapla. Not everyone liked how hard it was to make more elaborate structures, but one tester rated it 100,000 on a scale of 1 to 10.

THE WASHINGTON POST

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Transporter 3
Friday 1:25 4:30 7:15 9:55
Saturday 1:25 4:30 7:15 9:55
Sunday 1:25 4:30 7:15
Mon thru Thurs 4:30 7:15
Jason Statham, Robert Berleand
Action, Crime, Sequel • Rated PG 13
Synopsis
Frank Martin has been pressured into transporting Valentina, the kidnapped daughter of Leonid Vasilev, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency for the Ukraine, from Marseilles through Stuttgart and Budapest until he ends up in Odessa on the Black Sea. Along the way, with the help of Inspector Tarconi, Frank has to contend with the people who strong armed him to take the job, agents sent by Vasilev to intercept him, and the general non-cooperation of his passenger.

Four Christmases
Friday 1:15 4:05 7:10 9:45
Saturday 1:15 4:05 7:10 9:45
Sunday 1:15 4:05 7:10
Mon thru Thurs 4:05 7:10
Nince Vaughn, Reese Witherspoon
Comedy, Family, Holiday • Rated PG 13
Synopsis
No one enjoys the holidays more than Brad and Kate. Every December 25th, this happily unmarried, upscale San Francisco couple embark on a holiday tradition they have shared every year since they met—ditching their crazy families for a relaxing, fun-filled vacation in some sunny exotic locale. There, sipping margaritas by the pool, they toast the season, knowing they have once again avoided the chaos and emotional fallout of their four respective households: divorced parents, squabbling siblings, out-of-control kids and all the simmering resentments and awkward moments that are the hallmarks of every family Christmas.

Australia
Friday 1:00 4:00 7:00 10:00
Saturday 1:00 4:00 7:00 10:00
Sunday 1:00 4:00 7:00
Mon thru Thurs 4:00 7:00
Nicole Kidman, Hugh Jackman
War, Romance • Rated PG 13
Synopsis
In Australia, on the brink of World War II, an English aristocrat travels to the faraway continent, where she meets a rough-hewn local and reluctantly agrees to join forces with him to save the land she inherited. Together, they embark upon a transforming journey across hundreds of miles of the world's most beautiful yet unforgiving terrain, only to still face the bombing of the city of Darwin by the Japanese forces that attacked Pearl Harbor.

Twilight
Friday 1:30 4:25 7:20 9:50
Saturday 1:30 4:25 7:20 9:50
Sunday 1:30 4:25 7:20
Mon thru Thurs 4:25 7:20
Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson
Drama, Thriller • Rated PG 13

Bolt
Friday 1:10 4:15 7:30 9:30
Saturday 1:10 4:15 7:30 9:30
Sunday 1:10 4:15 7:30
Mon thru Thurs 4:15 7:30
John Travolta, Miley Cyrus
Action, Animated • Rated PG

Quantum of Solace
Friday 1:05 4:20 7:05 9:35
Saturday 1:05 4:20 7:05 9:35
Sunday 1:05 4:20 7:05
Mon thru Thurs 4:20 7:05
Daniel Craig, Judi Dench
Action, Adventure • Rated PG 13

Madagascar Escape 2 Africa
Friday 1:20 4:10 7:25 9:40
Saturday 1:20 4:10 7:25 9:40
Sunday 1:20 4:10 7:25
Mon thru Thurs 4:10 7:25
Ben Stiller, Chris Rock
Comedy, Animated • Rated PG

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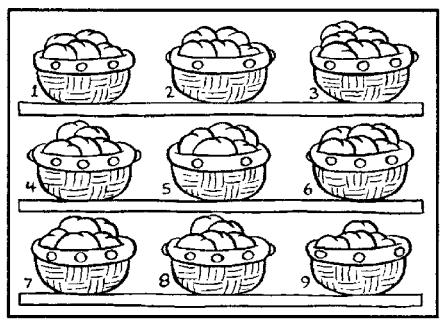


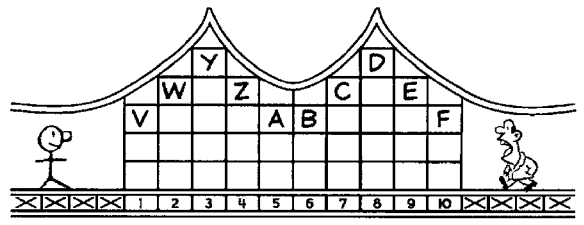
HERE'S A PEACHY PROBLEM! Two of the above fruit baskets look exactly alike. See if you can "pick" them out in one minute flat.

Answer: Baskets 4 and 8.

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

Illustrated by David Coulson



A WORD BRIDGE!

The bridge above contains 10 supporting words. We give you the first letter of each word, plus plenty of hints.

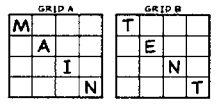
1. A large barrel.
2. Science fiction unit of speed.
3. Heard in the mountains.
4. Outlandishly comic.
5. Exactly suitable; appropriate.
6. To prohibit or deprive.
7. Teeth found on a gear.
8. To fix a computer program.
9. Type of Dutch cheese.
10. Said to be sly.

DOUBLE FEATURE! Arrange the five letters pictured here into two five-letter words that have more or less opposite meanings.

Answer: UNTIE and UNITE.

BIG TOP TESTING TIME! Pictured below are two puzzle grids for you to fill in. Hints are given for each word. The words in Grid B contain the same letters as the corresponding words in Grid A.

1. A good friend.
2. A weak excuse.
3. A happy expression.
4. To change direction.



1. People on the same side.
2. Complete food serving.
3. A boxing area.
4. An undersized animal.

Answers: 1. Mate-team. 2. Lame-meal. 3. Grin-ring. 4. Turn-runt.

Answers: 1. Vat. 2. Warp. 3. Yodel. 4. Zany. 5. Apt. 6. Ban. 7. Cogs. 8. Debug. 9. Edam. 10. Fox.

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Do dogs smile?

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: How do dogs learn to smile? Years ago, I adopted an 8-year-old Borzoi that had been terribly abused. "Frank" was a very fearful dog, but with lots of patience and TLC, he calmed down quite a bit and even accepted my other dog, "Farley." One evening while lying on the couch, Frank looked at me and bared his teeth. I thought he was snarling at me, but when I asked another Borzoi owner about it, he said Frank was smiling! Does a dog relate "happy" with smiling?—K.H.S., Fairport, N.Y.

DEAR K.H.S.: Normally, when a dog appears to be "smiling" he either really is baring his teeth (and growling, which is *not* a happy sound) to warn someone off, or his demeanor—slightly open mouth, tongue hanging out and a general air of happiness—makes one think he is smiling even if it's not a genuine "human" smile.

But I thought that an experienced owner saying that a dog was actually smiling was unusual, so I looked up some information on the breed. And indeed, the Borzoi (or Russian Wolfhound) has this neat little trait: The submissive gesture for this gentle giant of a dog is to curl back his lips and expose his teeth. The "smile" on a Borzoi looks so much like a snarl that most strangers will quickly back away.

So, kudos to you on bringing Frank around, from a shy abuse victim to a loving companion who returned to the natural behaviors of a Borzoi: lounging on the couch and enjoying the company of his family. Thanks for a great story.

■ ■ ■

Send your tips, questions and comments to Paws Corner, c/o King Features Weekly Service, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475, or e-mail them to pawscorner@hotmail.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Samantha Weaver

■ If you're like the average American, you watch television for 4 hours and 34 minutes every day.

■ It was Canadian journalist, editor and poet Mark Abley who made the following observation: "Modern English is the Wal-Mart of languages: convenient, huge, hard to avoid, superficially friendly and devouring all rivals in its eagerness to expand."

■ Those who study such things say that an adult right whale requires 400,000 calories a day to survive. They also note that the mainstay of these mammals' diet is a flea-sized crustacean called a copepod.

■ If you live in Georgia, you need to be careful about that wagging tongue: In that state it's illegal to spread a false rumor.

■ Now that the election is over, it might be interesting to note that more than half of all Americans can't name their elected official in the U.S. House of Representatives. And only 40 percent can name all three branches of the U.S. government. (For those of you in the other 60 percent, they're the legislative, judicial and executive.)

■ One hurricane can generate up to 200 times the energy of all the world's power plants combined.

■ If you're planning to head to Kansas for a vacation next summer, you might want to plan to hit the small town of Cawker City during August. That's when the home of the world's largest ball of twine hosts a weekend-long Twine-a-Thon festival.

■ Are you a locavore? In all likelihood, you don't even know what a locavore is—until very recently, I didn't, either. It was the 2007 Word of the Year as chosen by the New Oxford American Dictionary, and it refers to a person who eats nothing but local food.

■ ■ ■

Thought for the Day: "For disappearing acts, it's hard to beat what happens to the eight hours supposedly left after eight of sleep and eight of work."—Doug Larson

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MAGIC MAZE ● BY THE —

U Y V R S O L H E B X U R O L
I E B Y V R S S Q N K H E B Y
W T N R O L I E J G E B Y W U
R P I E C E P A L N K I G D B
Z X V M K K D S H P S Q O M K
I G E A C O A I R T O Y W U S
Q P N N Z O T D S E R E V I R
L J H E F B Y E R Y B O P E C
A Y N X V U L U M A A M H S Q
P N M K J U O H F A O W U S E
C B Z Y R H D R O W S B X N V

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions - forward, backward, up, down and diagonally.

Board
Book
Bye
Hour
Name
Numbers
People
Piece
River
Rules
Same token
Seaside
Short hairs
Sword
Wayside

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GO FIGURE! by Linda Thistle

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

DIFFICULTY: ★

★ Moderate ★★ Difficult
★★★ GO FIGURE!

	x		+		29
−		x		+	
	x		+		25
x		−		+	
	x		−		22
25		26		18	

1 2 4 5 6 7 8 8 9

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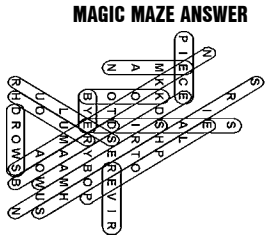
MAGIC MAZE ANSWER



GO FIGURE ANSWER

25		26		18	
5	x	6	−	8	22
x		−		+	
2	x	8	+	9	25
−		x		+	
7	x	4	+	1	29

Hallway makeover with magazine covers

When I heard about 46-year-old Johnnie Herbert and his blended family of three 13-year-old and two 16-year-old girls, I was curious how he connects with a houseful of teens. His answer was simple: a collage. Puzzled, I walked into the hallway separating the girls' bedrooms, and I got it.

All five small walls were completely covered with hip magazine covers. Arranged in neat rows with interesting "headline" borders to fill in spaces, I spotted IN Style, Teen Vogue, YM, Teen People, Seventeen and even dad's GQ. No wallpaper book could ever compete with this trendy decor.

It wasn't just a hodgepodge arrangement. A 2005 People cover of Brad Pitt and Jennifer Anniston's split was cut in half, with each part in separate spaces on the wall. Ouch!

The project began three years ago and continues to literally be the glue that helps keep Johnnie connected with his five daughters. He admits it's a super-fun way to enter their minds and talk about their interests. And it's in flux. Paris Hilton was recently replaced with last month's eye-catching Sports Illustrated cover of Michael Phelps and his gleaming gold medals. "Nothing stays the same—just like family life," Johnnie concedes.

The idea germinated with a 2005 Time magazine cover story about 13-year-old girls. "I had two at the time, and I knew I'd have three more in three years, so I wanted to display it, since it's part of my identity." Now part of the "wallpaper," it takes center stage.

Here's how they did it together:

■ Save at least 30 favorite magazines and catalog covers to start. It's OK to resume the project again in a few months. Buy an all-in-one wallpaper border paste in a squeeze bottle with a roller on top, such as the Golden Harvest brand at Home Depot.

■ Arrange the covers on the floor in front of the wall to determine how you want them to hang. Since the covers don't fit perfectly, have extras to cut and paste in the margin areas.

■ Run water over the front and back of one magazine cover page. Set it on a kitchen counter for a few minutes. Roll the wallpaper paste liberally over the backside, including edges, until it is super-saturated. Wait a couple of minutes, reapply paste and then hand it over to your teen, who may roll it onto a clean, painted wall. Wipe off excess paste as you go. Done. Next cover, please.

■ ■ ■

Donna Erickson's award-winning television series "Donna's Day" airs on public television nationwide. Visit www.donnasday.com to find out when it airs on your local PBS station and to sign up for Donna's e-newsletter. Her latest book is "Donna Erickson's Fabulous Funstuff for Families."

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Life & Style

'Miracle Worker' author William Gibson dies at 94

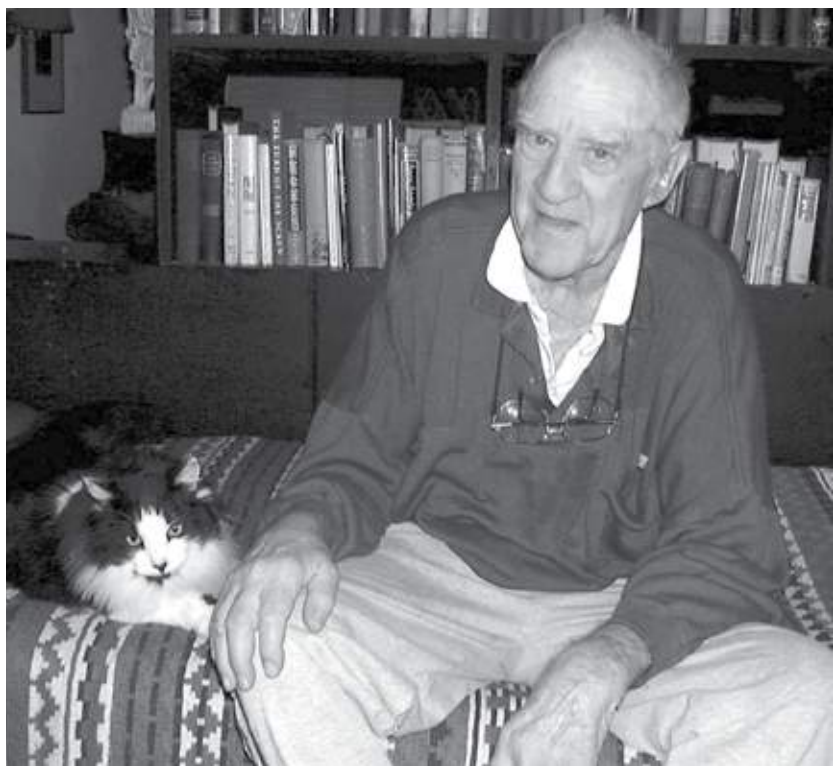
NEW YORK (AP)—Playwright William Gibson, whose "The Miracle Worker" has thrilled audiences for nearly a half-century with the true story of the deaf-blind Helen Keller's rescue from a world of ignorance, has died. He was 94.

Gibson died Tuesday in Stockbridge, Mass., according to the Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home in Great Barrington.

Gibson wrote a dozen plays, including the Tony-winning "Two for the Seesaw," but would be forever known for "The Miracle Worker." First written for television, the story of a young Keller forging a relationship with her teacher, Annie Sullivan, made its Broadway debut in 1959.

"Nothing in the theatre this season is so overwhelming as the last inarticulate but eloquent scene in which a frantic little girl for the first time understands the meaning of a word and realizes that the teacher is not a fiend but a friend," New York Times critic Brooks Atkinson wrote. "One small but blinding ray of light has penetrated the frightening darkness."

The production, directed by Arthur Penn and starring Anne Bancroft and 12-year-old Patty Duke, earned Tonys in 1960 for best play, best actress (Bancroft) and best director. It was made into a movie in 1962, bringing Academy Awards for Bancroft, as best actress, and Duke, best supporting actress, and Oscar nominations for Penn and Gibson.



AP

In this Jan. 7, 2003 file photo, playwright and author William Gibson, 88, sits with his cat Reilly at their home in Stockbridge, Mass.

"The Miracle Worker" came a year after Gibson's first professionally produced play, "Two for the Seesaw," also a major success.

The 1958 romantic drama about a straight-laced lawyer who falls in love with a dancer brought Bancroft her first Tony and also nominations for best play and best director (Penn.) The 1962 film version starred Robert Mitchum and Shirley MacLaine.

Gibson garnered another Tony nomination in 1965 as co-author of "Golden Boy," a musical version of the play by Clifford Odets. It starred Sammy Davis Jr.

"The act of writing makes everything possible to me," Gibson said in a 2003 interview with The Associated Press at his home in Stockbridge, Mass. "I've always found the business of writing has helped me to live."

Gibson's last Broadway play was "Golda's Balcony," a one-woman show starring Tovah Feldshuh as Israeli prime minister Golda Meir during one of her most difficult times - the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

It was a heavily revised version of "Golda," Gibson's 1977 Broadway flop that featured a large cast and Bancroft in the title role.

Although the 2003 play marked the last time Gibson wrote for Broadway, he continued to write novels, short stories and poetry.

Gibson was born in the Bronx, New York City, in 1914. A skittish teenager who found comfort in Broadway shows and the written word, Gibson studied creative writing at City College.

His first moneymaking piece was a short story published in Esquire for $150 during the 1930s. At the suggestion of his agent, Gibson began writing for the stage. He wrote five plays while honing his skills at the Topeka Civic Theatre in Kansas, then returned to New York and started work on "Two for the Seesaw," which ran for more than 700 performances in New York.

After selling "Two for the Seesaw" to Hollywood for $600,000, Gibson moved to the Berkshires with his wife, Margaret, and began writing "The Miracle Worker."

The story was first done for television's "Playhouse 90." It took three weeks to write. When he decided to rewrite the teleplay for the stage, Gibson spent six months on the project.

Keller was born in Alabama in 1880 and stricken deaf and blind at the age of 19 months. The events described in the play occurred in 1887, when Sullivan came to teach the 6-year-old, spelling into her hand until the mute, near-wild girl realized what language was. With Sullivan at her side for nearly a half-century, Keller grew into a world-famous author and humanitarian.

Nearing 80 when Gibson's television play was written, Keller was initially dubious about the idea but later had a positive opinion about it, according to the book "Helen Keller: A Life" by Dorothy Herrmann.

Coming full circle, "The Miracle Worker" was remade as a television film in 1979, with Duke in Bancroft's old role as Sullivan and Melissa Gilbert of "Little House on the Prairie" as Helen. Another TV version, in 2000, broke with its predecessors by using 8-year-old Hallie Kate Eisenberg, rather than a teenager, to play little Helen.

The play also is an annual event at Ivy Green, Keller's birthplace in Tuscumbia, Ala., where it is staged on the grounds where Sullivan actually taught the girl more than a century ago.

Gibson's wife, Margaret Brenman-Gibson, psychologist and author of a study on playwright Clifford Odets, died in 2004.

City Ballet celebrates whopper of a gift

NEW YORK (AP)—Next time you're looking for a place to donate $100 million, consider a theater: Such a sum can get you the best pair of seats, any night you want them, for the rest of your life.

That's what New York City Ballet chief Peter Martins offered David H. Koch on Tuesday night as he toasted the oil billionaire, one of the world's richest men, sitting with his wife in the first ring. Koch's gift, pledged in the summer, will help renovate Lincoln Center's formerly named New York State Theater - now, it's named after Koch - home to both the ballet troupe and to New York City Opera.

If times weren't so hard, Martins told Koch from the stage, the entire audience would have gotten some vodka, as they did in January 2004, on what would have been George Balanchine's 100th birthday. But in this economy, only Martins, Koch and his wife got the booze.

Otherwise, it was the usual fall gala at New York City Ballet, with ample opportunity for people-watching. Sarah Jessica Parker was there in a glittery black minidress, running into friends like the designer Valentino and Candace Bushnell, the sex columnist on which Parker's famous TV character, Carrie Bradshaw, was based (Bushnell is married to an NYCB principal dancer.)

As for the dancing, it was a greatest-hits style evening, a pleasing mix of styles, choreographers and composers. A weightier first act gave way to a more lighthearted second half, with the guest Julliard Jazz Orchestra onstage, playing music from Wynton Marsalis to Ray Charles to Duke Ellington.

The evening opened with Martins' own "Chichester Psalms," notable for the presence of the huge New York City Opera chorus onstage, and the lush dancing of Sara Mearns, justifiably promoted to principal last season. Later in the first act, Janie Taylor and Daniel Ulbricht lent the right touch of dramatic intensity to an excerpt of Balanchine's "Ivesiana," in which the ballerina spends virtually the entire time atop the shoulders of several male partners.

In Act 2, Savannah Lowery was an appealingly kooky heroine in the comic piece "Blossom Got Kissed," to Ellington's music, with especially sharp dancing from the corps. The real crowd-pleaser, though, was Andrew Veyette, dancing with wit and athletic vigor around a little red chair in a solo from Martins' "A Fool For You."

After the show, the well-clad crowd retired to the promenade for dinner and dancing, leaving the rest of the crowd to file somewhat wistfully out of the building.

Still with taboos, Saudi art scene grows

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP)—Saudis and foreigners crowded into a gallery at the French Embassy, checking out the paintings and sculptures of seven Saudi women artists, the latest opening in a growing art scene in the conservative kingdom.

One artist took advantage of the venue to hang an abstract painting of a woman, with one breast clearly depicted—a hint of nudity still taboo outside the diplomatic confines of the embassy, where Saudi Arabia's religious police cannot enter.

The Wednesday night showing in a small hall was packed with expatriates and, more significantly Saudis, whose presence was a reflection of the surge of interest in the arts in the kingdom in the past few years. Local arts shows have been on the rise, more Saudi artists are participating in overseas exhibits, and more universities and schools are offering arts degrees.

The first non-governmental arts society was established a year ago, with four women on its 10-member board. Saudis have become more accepting of abstract art, which, only a few years ago, was the subject of ridicule. And in many Arab cities, Saudi collectors are snapping up works by local artists, some of whom get special orders from their rich clients.

In a sign of the government's attempts to support the arts, the Foreign Ministry and the tourism board held a kingdom-wide competition last year for the best works of art. Those chosen will be displayed in the kingdom's embassies.

The change is dramatic from a few years ago.

AP

A Saudi woman looks at artwork during the opening of art exhibition featuring the work of seven Saudi female artists at the French Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Wednesday, Nov. 26, 2008.

In 2001, when one of the artists in Wednesday's show, Manal al-Harbi, enrolled for her masters in sculpture, she was the only student in the only university that gave a degree in that major. The specialty was frowned upon by many because of a prevalent view that the depiction of human form violates Islamic law and that sculptures look like idols.

"They would bring me teachers from Egypt," recalled al-Harbi, whose sculptures depict Arabic calligraphy, not humans.

Despite the progress, there still are limitations in this conservative country, where men and women are strictly segregated. Artists say they keep works that depict nudity away from public shows and if they display them at all, it's only at embassies.

At the French Embassy, abstract paintings in bold yellows, reds and greens adorned the walls. Sculptures made of rocks from various areas in the kingdom rested on one stand.

On one table stood the work of artist Eman Jibreen, expressing the dichotomy between a Saudi woman's public appearance and her inner self. A series of tall boxes were painted on the exterior with images of Saudi women swathed in the mandatory black cloak. Inside each box were pictures of Albert Einstein, a child, a kitchen - an expression of each woman's individuality that is masked by the cloaks.

A nearby caption read:

"We may look the same to you

"A scarf and a featureless black blob. ...

"But it is just a cover over our heads. Our faces maybe.

"But it has never been a cover for our brains."

Jibreen's uncle, Abdul-Rahman Jibreen, said he was overjoyed to see his niece's work displayed in public.

But he said he wished Jibreen, who did not attend the function because of another commitment, lived in "an environment that appreciates art more than here."

"In a place like Italy, France or England, she would've done miracles because she would've been exposed to more museums, art and other artists," he said.

Moore: Craig 'marvelous' as Bond

HONG KONG (AP)—From one Bond to another: job well done. Roger Moore told reporters Thursday that Daniel Craig was "marvelous" as James Bond because he brought a fresh dimension to the character.

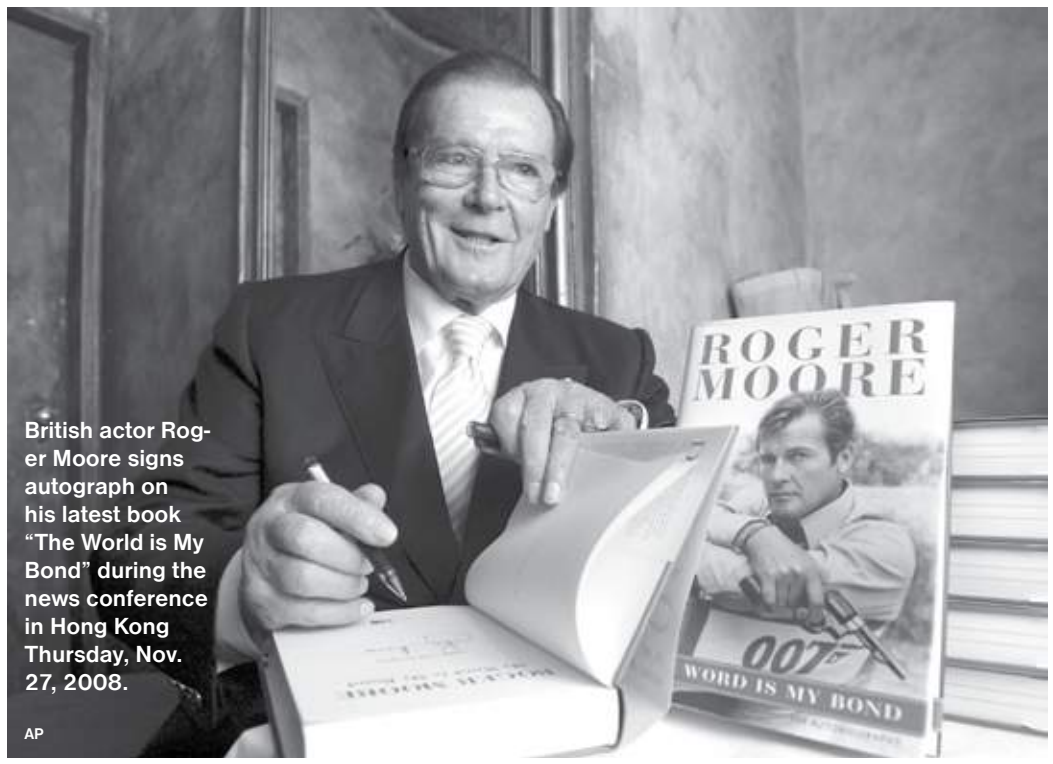
The 81-year-old actor, who starred in seven Bond films in the 1970s and the 1980s, said Craig's performances in Steven Spielberg's 2005 political thriller "Munich" and "Sylvia" in 2003, in which he plays the poet Ted Hughes, helped shape a new Bond.

"All of those parts were very, very different to one's conception of Bond ... I thought he was absolutely marvelous," Moore said of Craig's acting in "Casino Royale."

Fans have criticized the casting of Craig, questioning whether a stage-trained actor with little action experience pull off the role of Bond.

Moore, speaking at an event in Hong Kong to promote his autobiography "My Word Is My Bond," said he had yet to see Craig's latest turn as the British spy in "Quantum of Solace."

Moore said he met Craig for the first time at a recent celebration for Bond creator Ian Fleming in London and found him a "charming guy."



British actor Roger Moore signs autograph on his latest book "The World is My Bond" during the news conference in Hong Kong Thursday, Nov. 27, 2008.

AP

Berlin museum shows off antique gods

BERLIN (AP)—A new exhibit of Greek and Roman antiquities at Berlin's Pergamon museum puts 170 sculptures, vases and other works on display in Germany for the first time in six decades.

"Return of the Gods" is the largest exhibit the museum has mounted using pieces solely from its own collection, said Martin Maischberger, antiquities curator at the Pergamon.

"Of course, we don't consider them 'German pieces,' as they belong to world heritage," Maischberger said.

Most of the pieces were excavated in Italy, Turkey and Greece and landed in the collection of Prussia's Frederick the Great, who ruled in the 1700s.

In 1945, at the close of World War II, invading Soviet Soldiers seized the collection and sent it back to Russia, which was the fate of many artistic treasures in Germany. Russia declared the art had been seized as retribution for the 27 million Soviet lives lost and destruction of entire cities during the conflict. The two nations are still negotiating the return of many pieces.

But the Pergamon's antiquities were returned to East Germany 13 years later as a symbol of Cold War camaraderie between the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic, as East Germany was known.

The collection languished in storage in the Pergamon's basement until 2004 when FAAP, a Brazilian culture and education foundation, offered to contribute euro300,000 ($388,000) toward restoration of the pieces in return for a yearlong loan to exhibit them in Sao Paulo.

Now back in Berlin, "Return of the Gods" runs from Nov. 27 to July 5, 2009.

Spanish novelist Juan Marse wins Cervantes Prize

MADRID, Spain (AP)—Novelst Juan Marse, known for his descriptions of hardship in his native Catalonia region after Spain's civil war, has won the Spanish-speaking world's highest literary honor - the Cervantes Prize.

Culture Minister Cesar Antonio Molina announced the award Thursday for the 75-year-old writer from Barcelona.

The prize, created by Spain in 1975 and carrying a euro125,000 ($160,000) cash stipend, is likened to a Nobel for literature in Spanish and honors a writer's body of work.

Marse is best known for his novels about people enduring tough times in Catalonia after the 1936-1939 civil war, which ended with fascist dictator Francisco Franco's victory and was followed by years of repression against his foes.

Many of Marse's books have been made into movies including "Ultimas Tardes con Teresa," or "Last Evenings with Teresa," in 1983. It is the story of an ill-fated romance between a rich young woman and working-class man.

Last year the Cervantes prize went to Argentine poet Juan Gelman.

The prize is presented each April by King Juan Carlos in Alcala de Henares, the birthplace of "Don Quixote" author Miguel de Cervantes.

Previous winners include Jorge Luis Borges of Argentina, Peruvian-born Mario Vargas Llosa and Carlos Fuentes of Mexico.

The prize tends to alternate each year between Spanish and Latin American writers.

T.I. serves Thanksgiving dinner to Atlanta needy

ATLANTA (AP)—In his hit "Whatever You Like," rapper T.I. offers iced Patron tequila and stacks of money to the lady in his life.

On Thursday at Turner Field, the Atlanta native was instead offering steaming spoonfuls of corn, but the stacks were still involved - this time for an Atlanta food bank struggling during the bad economy.

T.I. volunteered at the city's largest Thanksgiving dinner at the Atlanta Braves' home field. The event, which turned out close to 22,000, was organized by the Hosea Feed the Hungry and Homeless.

"It's a pleasure for me to help service those who are definitely in need of the service," said T.I., before taking his spot on the serving line.

T.I. raised nearly $100,000 within two hours on a local radio show on Wednesday. Meanwhile another Atlanta rapper, Young Jeezy, was donating $5,000, his manager said.

Event co-director Elisabeth Omilami said the donations came at the right time. She said the program, dedicated to feeding the poor and homeless, had a 10 percent decrease in income because of the slumping economy.

"I shouldn't be but I'm amazed by their giving," said Omilami, daughter of the late Hosea Williams. "I've been doing this for 39 years but I've never seen a year like this one in terms of donations."

AP

Rapper T.I. whose real name is Clifford Harris, of Atlanta, reacts to a question from defense attorney Charles Isaly in Hamilton County Common Pleas Court, Friday, Nov. 21, 2008, in Cincinnati.

Couple's happiness grates on man who felt betrayed

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: My first serious relationship lasted a year and ended more than eight years ago. "Stacy" was terrific, but we were very different, and our relationship came to an amicable end.

Several months later, I heard that Stacy had begun dating a close friend of mine, "Alex," soon after our breakup. Needless to say, I was devastated. Alex's betrayal was as painful or more so than that of Stacy. I broke off all contact with them in an attempt to salvage my dignity. I haven't spoken to either one since.

All these years later, I am happily married to a wonderful woman. I hear through the grapevine occasionally that Stacy and Alex are still together. Whenever I do, I feel unaccountably upset. It's not that I'm pining for an old flame, because I wouldn't trade my wife for any woman on Earth. I have thought a lot about it and believe I am clinging to the naive belief—or hope—that people who do unkind, deceitful things always come to regret it in the end.

I am grappling with the guilt of wishing unhappiness for two people who are obviously happy together. I can't help it, but I know I'd be glad if I learned they'd broken up. I am confused and embarrassed about why I even still care. Your thoughts, please?

LACKING CLOSURE IN SAN JOSE

DEAR LACKING CLOSURE: Frankly, after reading your letter, I am a little confused, too. You say your relationship with Stacy came to an "amicable" end because you were very different. And yet, you view the idea that a friend could be interested in her as a "betrayal," "unkind, deceitful" and an assault on your dignity. It appears that after all this time, you still have not grown up.

That a happily married adult would spend his time looking back eight years to a relationship that came to an "amicable" end, and harbor the feelings that you do, is a petty waste of time. What did you expect the girl to do? Enter a convent? Stamp "taboo" on her forehead?

You say you believe in and hope for the concept of karma. Be careful what you wish for because it can rebound and affect what happens to you.

DEAR ABBY: I am a 27-year-old woman who gained some weight after I recently quit smoking. Now my co-workers and people I hardly know keep asking me if I'm pregnant.

All the weight I've gained is in my stomach. I do look pregnant. (I have two daughters, so obviously, I have seen myself in that state.)

How should I respond to these people without coming off as mean and angry?

UN-EXPECTING IN SCHENECTADY

DEAR UN-EXPECTING: Sometimes the best way to put thoughtless people in their place is to simply tell them the truth. In your case, smile and say, "I'm NOT pregnant." I'll bet the responses you get to that statement will be interesting.

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I disagree on many things, one of which I think you can help us with. When an appointment or event is changed to a later date or time, what is the correct term? My husband says the time has been "pushed back," and I say it has been "pushed ahead." Nothing is riding on this except maybe bragging rights! What do you say?

M.W. IN NEW WINDSOR, N.Y.

DEAR M.W.: I say it has been "postponed."

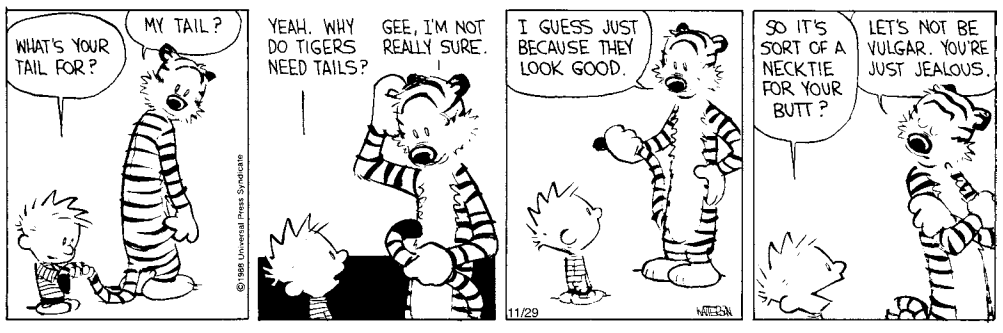
Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

For an excellent guide to becoming a better conversationalist and a more attractive person, order "How to Be Popular." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $6 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby Popularity Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)

Pastimes

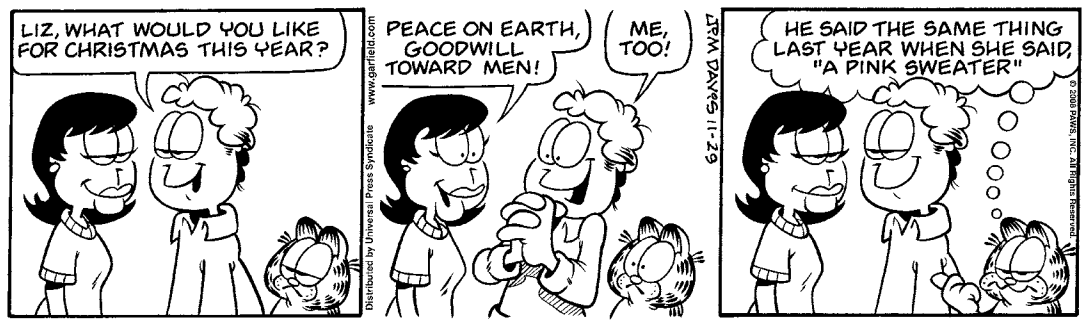
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


WHAT'S YOUR TAIL FOR?
MY TAIL?
YEAH. WHY DO TIGERS NEED TAILS?
GEE, I'M NOT REALLY SURE.
I GUESS JUST BECAUSE THEY LOOK GOOD.
SO IT'S SORT OF A NECKTIE FOR YOUR BUTT?
LET'S NOT BE VULGAR. YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS.
11/29
WATTERSON

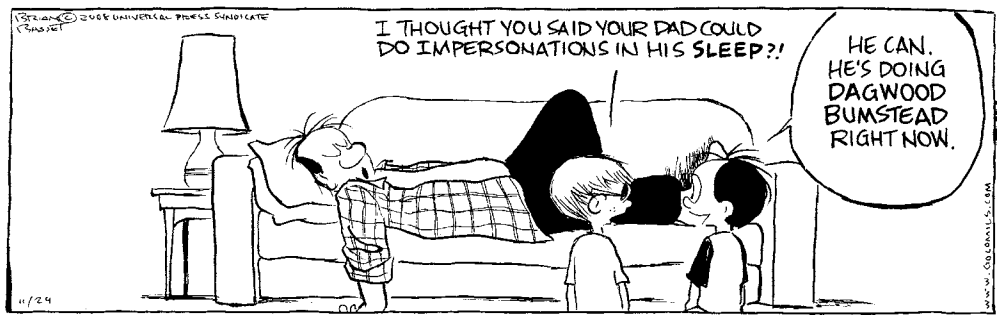
Garfield®

By Jim Davis


LIZ, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE FOR CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR?
PEACE ON EARTH, GOODWILL TOWARD MEN!
ME, TOO!
HE SAID THE SAME THING LAST YEAR WHEN SHE SAID, "A PINK SWEATER"
JIM DAVIS 11-29
Distributed by Universal Press Syndicate www.garfield.com

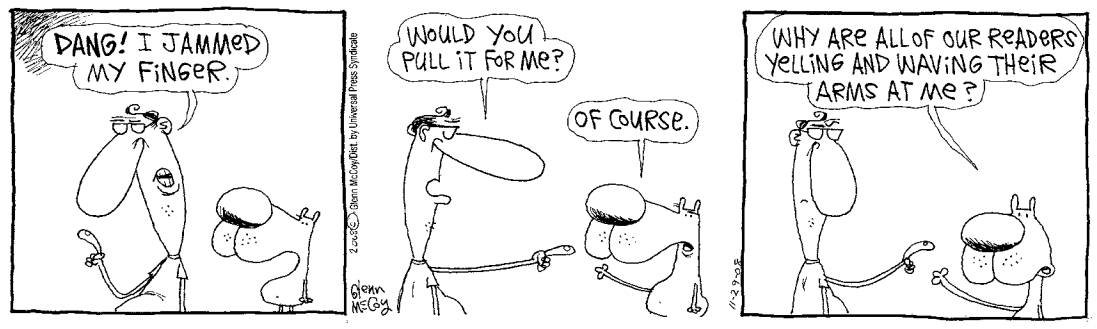
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Khan title
4 Difficult
8 Desire
12 Three-man vessel?
13 Distant
14 — con-tendere
15 Raw rock
16 A few
17 Stento-rian
18 Relocates
21 Sick
22 2004 horror movie
23 Goopy stuff
26 Cowboy nickname
27 Aries
30 Info, slangily
31 "Okla-homa!" baddie
32 Singer Suzanne
33 Plant bristle
34 Mus-tache toiletry
35 Musk provider
36 Oft-tattooed word
37 — Lanka
38 French meat entree
45 Helps
46 Unyield-ing
47 Conger
48 Building block name
49 Birthday party necessity
50 Cartoon-ist's supply
51 Paradise
52 Brewery output
53 Us, to a Spaniard

DOWN
1 Covering
2 Mentor
3 The third man
4 Heated argument
5 Oppos-ing, with "of"
6 Freeway access
7 Clad
8 Acquired relative
9 Swiped
10 Hint
11 Scuttles
19 Flaccid
20 Campaign promise topic
23 Resort
24 De-pressed
25 Charged bit
26 Monkey suit
27 Gun the engine
28 Census statistic
29 Wrestling surface
31 Rum exporter
32 Henry —
34 Moo goo gai pan pan
35 Hags
36 Gardner's attorney
37 Orated
38 Garage event
39 Needing extra innings
40 Advan-tage
41 Russian river
42 Blood line?
43 Nevada city
44 Horned herd

Solution time: 27 mins.

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N	O	S	■	O	U	T	R	E	■	■	■	■
G	R	A	Y	■	R	H	O	■	P	L	E	A
■	■	■	O	A	T	■	C	H	I	S	E	L
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W	O	V	E	N	■	O	A	R	■	D	I	M
T	R	Y	S	T	■	O	L	D	■	S	A	Y

Yesterday's answer 11-29

1	2	3	■	4	5	6	7	■	8	9	10	11
12			■	13				■	14			
15			■	16				■	17			
18			19					20				
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38	39	40				41				42	43	44
45				■	46				■	47		
48					49					50		
51				■	52				■	53		

STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Jonathan Knight, 40; Don Cheadle, 44; Andrew McCarthy, 46; Kim Delaney, 47

Happy Birthday: Take your time and do what you have to do properly. Don't worry about what everyone else is doing—it's better to follow that little voice within. Get active and stay that way. Boredom will set in if you haven't got a plan. List your goals and don't waste another moment in checking them off. Your numbers are 9, 11, 24, 28, 37, 40, 44

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): A loss of money may come into play if you mix love with your financial situation. Do not lend money to anyone, even if he or she is your lover, child or best friend. Expect to have a sudden change in your earning ability. ✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): You'll learn something new about someone you thought you knew. This information will enable you to make a decision that should shape your future. This is a good day for love and romance. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): An argument will lead to a sudden change in your relationship with someone. Try not to step on toes or mislead someone who may want more from you than you are willing to give. Be honest. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Love, partnerships and enjoying what life has to offer are what it's all about. So much can happen if you are receptive and recognize what you have. A new look at an old love will revive a relationship. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): The work won't go anywhere, so take a break and enjoy the time you have with friends and family. Engage in something that gets you thinking and challenges you. You will learn a lot from interaction with others. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): You can't sit around complaining or listening to someone else's complaints. Get out, have some fun and, before you know it, you will make some new friends and find a new pastime. Avoid an argument by keeping busy. ✪✪✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Home may be where the heart is but you'll do better on the road. You need a serious break, so take it. Get a friend or relative to cover for you and treat yourself to something that makes you happy. ✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): All work and no play will get you into trouble with someone who needs attention. A little pleasure now and then might inspire you to work harder for shorter periods of time. It may be time to reassess your work habits. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): When it comes to making money or getting involved in a new venture, do your homework and, if everything checks out, get involved. There is money to be made if you put in the time and effort and have a good, solid game plan. ✪✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Don't let anyone swindle you out of your cash or possessions. This is not the time to donate to a group you know little about. Solid investments and long-term vision will buy you peace of mind. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): You have more to offer than you realize. Consider what you like to do and you will discover there is a way to make money doing it. A chance to give back will help you feel better about who you are and what you have become. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): You've got options, so don't settle for the first thing that comes along. A fast-talker will lead you down the wrong path but someone who loves you will protect you. A partnership from your past will come back into play. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are a stable individual, looking to do what's right. You are quick-witted, intelligent, aggressive and popular.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun,* ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations*

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

6		2				7		3
			4		5			
7								8
	3		9		7		5	
				2				
	7		5		8		2	
1								4
			7		9			
9		5				6		1

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 11/29

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

4	3	8	7	1	2	6	5	9
7	9	1	5	6	3	4	2	8
6	5	2	4	8	9	7	3	1
9	7	6	2	4	8	3	1	5
3	2	4	1	9	5	8	6	7
8	1	5	6	3	7	9	4	2
1	4	9	8	5	6	2	7	3
5	8	7	3	2	4	1	9	6
2	6	3	9	7	1	5	8	4

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 11/28

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

BREAKING A WORLD RECORD **Solution: 8 letters**

E	S	H	T	G	N	E	R	T	S	Y	A	L	E	R
G	N	I	H	S	A	M	S	B	P	F	O	R	C	E
W	R	I	L	D	E	X	C	E	E	D	I	A	O	C
E	I	E	L	V	R	T	G	S	E	M	C	C	A	O
I	W	N	H	A	E	A	T	T	D	E	E	E	C	R
G	(T)	O	N	C	N	R	W	A	T	H	L	D	H	D
H	S	(I)	R	E	A	E	R	A	E	O	E	T	A	S
T	C	T	(M)	K	R	E	R	P	K	C	B	A	I	L
S	I	I	U	(E)	W	O	T	D	R	K	R	T	I	T
P	P	T	P	O	M	A	B	E	A	E	A	H	N	R
O	M	E	P	E	T	O	D	R	M	Y	T	L	C	A
R	Y	P	M	H	O	L	R	P	O	B	E	E	L	I
T	L	M	L	K	O	P	L	D	N	N	L	T	A	N
S	O	O	S	H	W	A	L	K	E	E	Z	E	I	S
C	N	C	E	L	Y	T	S	E	E	R	F	E	M	S

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Admire, Adrenaline, Athlete, Attest, Award, Best, Books, Bronze, Celebrate, Claim, Coach, Commemorate, Competition, Emblem, Exceed, Force, Freestyle, Heptathlon, Hockey, Holder, Mark, Medal, Olympics, Order, People, Play, Power, Race, Records, Relay, Silver, Smashing, Speed, Sports, Strength, Teacher, Time, Title, Train, Walk, Weights, Winner, Work

Yesterday's Answer: Protection

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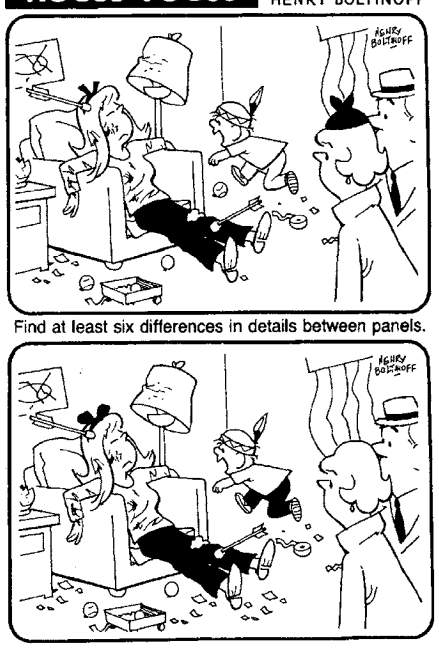
HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.

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Differences: 1. Boy's pants are black. 2. Ball near boy's foot is missing. 3. Mom's hat is gone. 4. Drapes are wider. 5. Girl's bow is different. 6. There's more trash on floor.

Wishing Well®

4	6	2	6	5	8	4	7	4	7	5	7	8
A	S	L	E	L	B	N	D	E	O	O	A	U
6	4	8	7	5	7	6	3	6	2	3	2	7
E	W	S	F	O	R	K	A	T	I	I	F	I
2	7	2	5	2	5	6	7	6	3	8	5	7
E	E	I	K	S	T	H	N	E	D	I	O	D
2	8	6	5	2	5	6	8	7	6	3	4	6
B	N	T	T	O	H	R	E	A	U	O	F	T
7	5	7	6	8	7	2	3	7	8	2	3	2
F	E	A	H	S	V	U	T	O	S	N	H	T
5	7	5	8	5	4	8	2	3	8	2	4	8
F	R	U	T	T	R	H	I	E	R	F	I	I
4	5	2	4	5	8	2	8	4	5	3	8	3
E	U	U	N	R	V	L	E	D	E	R	S	S

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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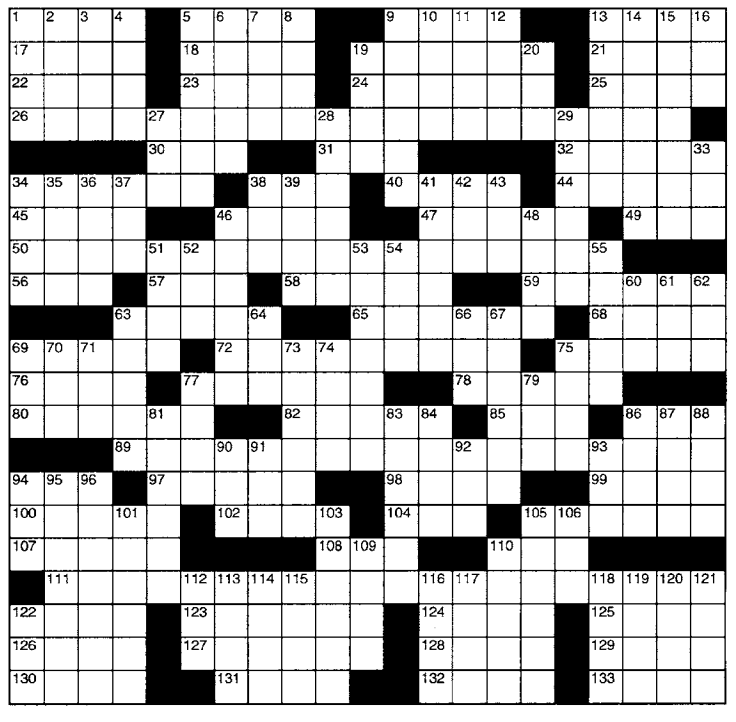
Super Crossword

THE MINIMOM

ACROSS
1 Word with dance or hero
5 — Pet
9 Play thing?
13 Rushes
17 Destroy
18 "You —?" (Lurch's line)
19 Merchant
21 "— partridge in . . ."
22 Dermatological problem
23 Foot part
24 Event of 622
25 Fancy
26 Start of a remark by Roseanne
30 "Sheila" singer
31 Echidna's tidbit
32 Account entry
34 Arthurian knight
38 Dunce
40 Scandinavian capital
44 Susan Lucci role
45 Beige
46 Burly Burl
47 Black and white delight
49 Neighbor of Okla.
50 Part 2 of remark
56 Way to satori
57 Team scream
58 Light metal group?
59 Spouse of Isis
63 Football's Lavelli
65 "The Scarlet Letter" heroine
68 Curtain fabric
69 Agricultural inventor
72 Part 3 of remark
75 Tucker or Roberts
76 Land measure
77 Crops up
78 Montezuma, for one
80 Peat's place
82 Forster's "— With a View"
85 "To be sure!"
86 Shorten a skirt
89 Part 4 of remark
94 Carry to class
97 Intuit
98 Green land
99 Kruger or Gluck
100 Clumsy
102 Prune a paragraph
104 Present for pop
105 Writer Rushdie
107 Pigeonhole
108 Glowing
110 Private reply?
111 End of remark
122 Meter reader?
123 Journalist Fallaci
124 Where to speak Farsi
125 Emilia's husband
126 "— take arms against a sea . . ."
127 "The Compleat Angler" author
128 Arrogant
129 It may be bitter
130 Govt. agents
131 — -do-well
132 Actress Joyce
133 Toboggan

DOWN
1 College club
2 "That hurts!"
3 Queue
4 Had no doubts
5 Kindergarten item
6 Writer Bret
7 Foot part
8 Eastern leader
9 Rapidly, to Rossini
10 Frenzy
11 Garfield's pal
12 Gilpin of "Frasier"
13 Nautical rope
14 Check
15 Impressive building
16 TV's "My Sister —"
19 Dilute
20 Sneaky sort
27 Meyers of "Kate & Allie"
28 Ornamental dangler
29 Principles
33 Duty
34 Saxophonist Stan
35 Need a rubdown
36 Small bird
37 Great bird?
38 Actress Gardner
39 Doris Day refrain
41 Cavort in the pool
42 — Cruces, NM
43 Can. province
46 '87 Warren Beatty film
48 Last name in fashion
51 "Dies —"
52 Rowan or Rather
53 Truman Cabinet member
54 Movie mogul Marcus
55 Whitman's bloomer
60 Fled
61 Frigid
62 Monsarrat's "The Cruel —"
63 Night vision?
64 Inventor Whitney
66 Actress Leoni
67 Pepsin or lipase
69 Barrier
70 Word form for "environment"
71 Goof
73 Sanford of "The Jeffersons"
74 Ralston or Miles
75 Hardy woman
77 Tennis legend
79 Golfer's gadget
81 Nervous —
83 "Swan Lake" heroine
84 1,102, to Calpurnia
86 Ian of "The Borrowers"
87 Role for 27 Down
88 Nasty
90 Sturm — Drang
91 Compass pt.
92 Mine find
93 Lyricist David
94 Coal container
95 Doughboy's duds
96 Conceal
101 Light quantum
103 Poet Wylie
105 Burnt —
106 Branch
109 Terrible name?
110 Periwinkle, for one
112 "Would you look at that!"
113 Algerian port
114 Vex
115 Winslet of "Hamlet"
116 Jackknife, e.g.
117 — surgery
118 Puppy protests
119 Monopoly destination
120 Stare salaciously
121 Daring
122 Ample abdomen



Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez

1. FOOD & DRINK: What is the spice paprika made from?
2. FAMOUS QUOTATIONS: Who once said, "If you ask me anything I don't know, I'm not going to answer."
3. ANATOMY: How many bones is the average human born with?
4. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Which presidential candidate appeared on the 1968 TV comedy "Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In"?
5. MEASUREMENTS: What is the equivalent weight of a stone, a traditional British unit of measurement?
6. HISTORY: Who led the Boston Tea Party prior to the Revolutionary War?
7. TECHNOLOGY: When did the computer mouse make its first public appearance?
8. MUSIC: Where is the House of the Rising Sun, according to the 1960s song of the same name?
9. GAMES: Which board game features a thimble as a playing piece?
10. LITERATURE: Who lives at 221B Baker Street, London?

Answers

1. Peppers, ranging from mild to hot
2. Yogi Berra
3. 300. Adults have 206 because some bones fuse together as children grow.
4. Richard Nixon, who uttered the line "Sock it to me?"
5. 14 pounds
6. Samuel Adams
7. 1968, in a computer demonstration
8. New Orleans
9. Monopoly
10. Sherlock Holmes

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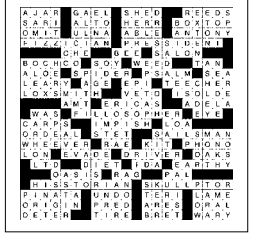
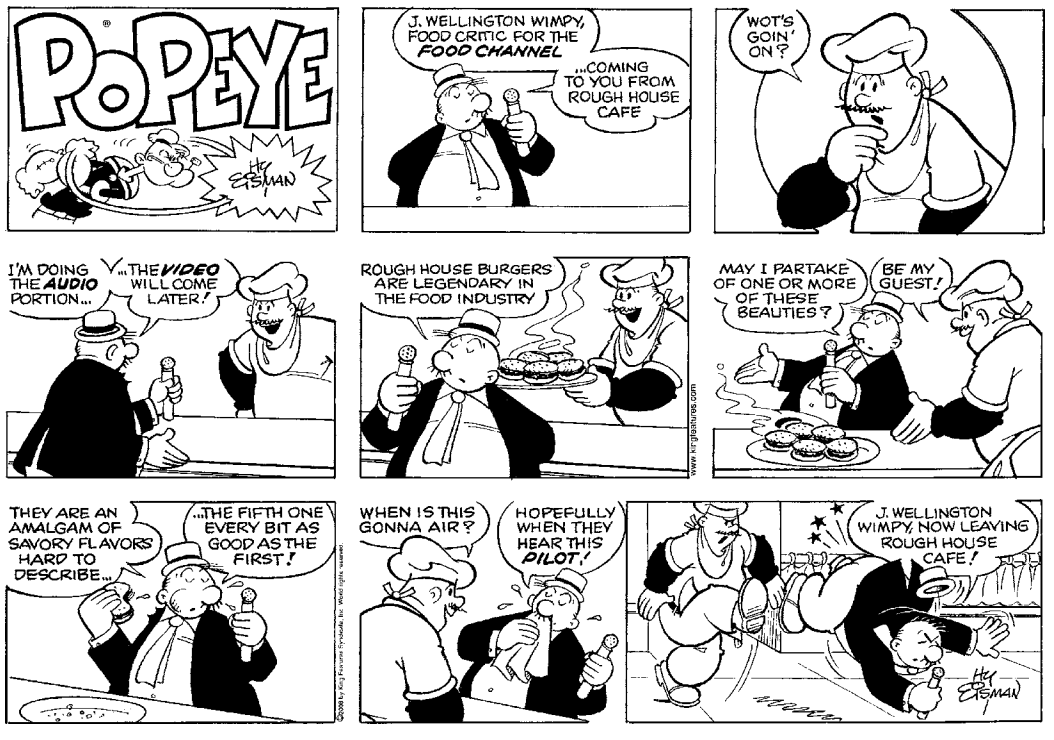
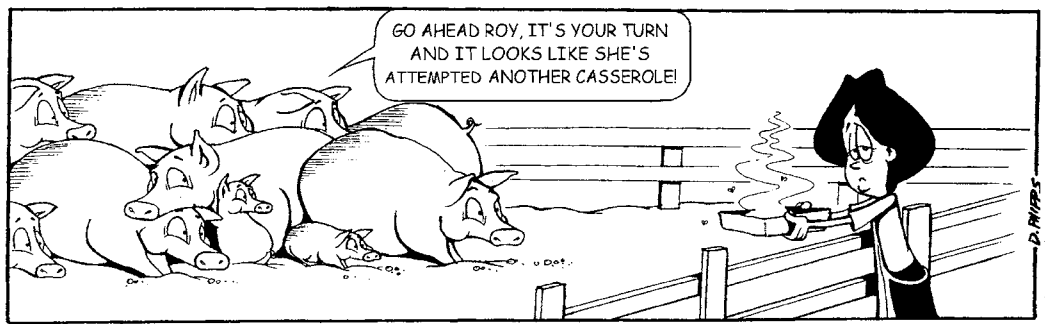
Saturday's Answers

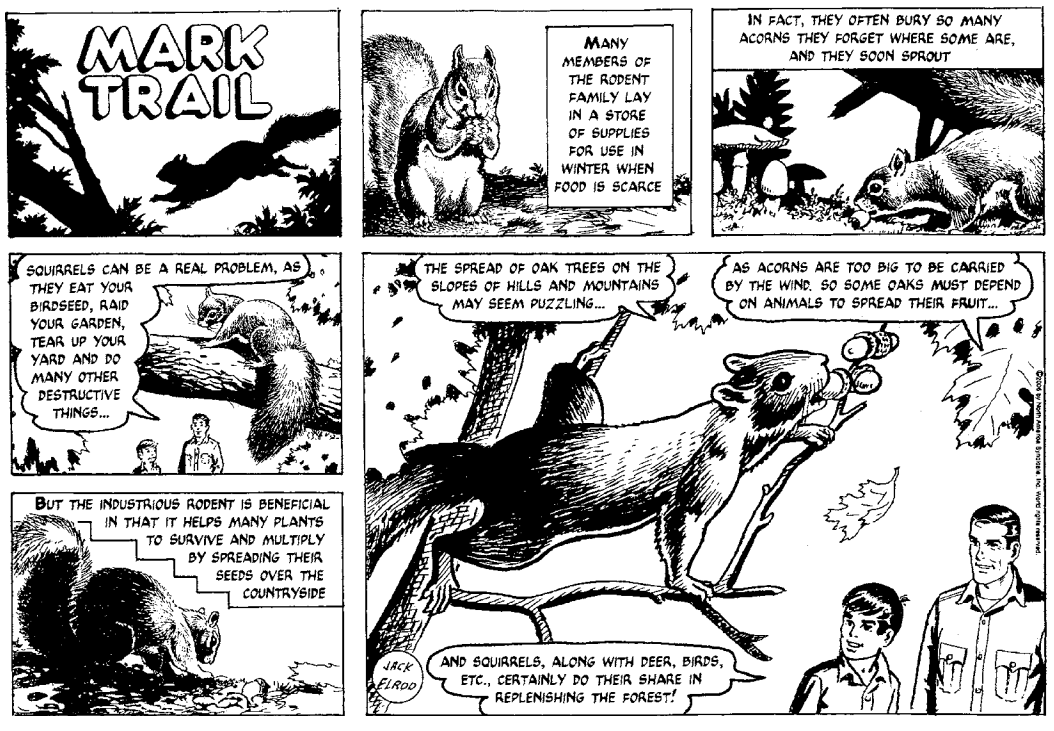


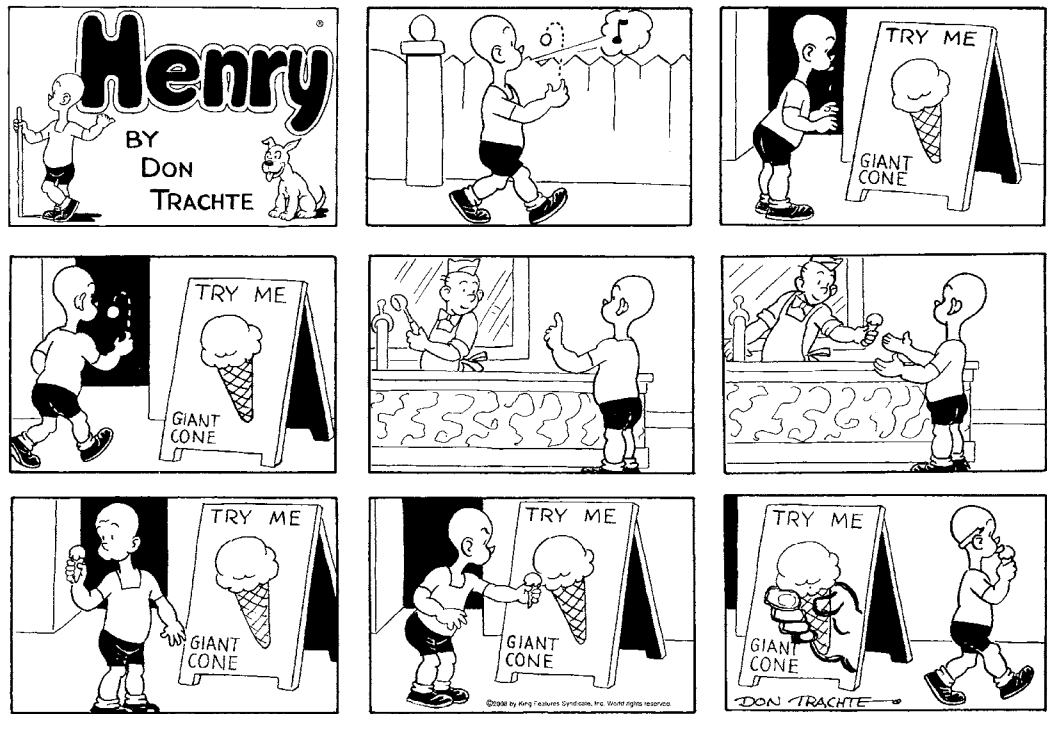

POPEYE
Hy Eisman
J. WELLINGTON WIMPY, FOOD CRITIC FOR THE FOOD CHANNEL
...COMING TO YOU FROM ROUGH HOUSE CAFE
WOT'S GOIN' ON?
I'M DOING THE AUDIO PORTION...
...THE VIDEO WILL COME LATER!
ROUGH HOUSE BURGERS ARE LEGENDARY IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY
MAY I PARTAKE OF ONE OR MORE OF THESE BEAUTIES?
BE MY GUEST!
THEY ARE AN AMALGAM OF SAVORY FLAVORS HARD TO DESCRIBE...
...THE FIFTH ONE EVERY BIT AS GOOD AS THE FIRST!
WHEN IS THIS GONNA AIR?
HOPEFULLY WHEN THEY HEAR THIS PILOT!
J. WELLINGTON WIMPY, NOW LEAVING ROUGH HOUSE CAFE!

Amber Waves by Dave T. Phipps



The Spats by Jeff Pickering


MARK TRAIL
MANY MEMBERS OF THE RODENT FAMILY LAY IN A STORE OF SUPPLIES FOR USE IN WINTER WHEN FOOD IS SCARCE
IN FACT, THEY OFTEN BURY SO MANY ACORNS THEY FORGET WHERE SOME ARE, AND THEY SOON SPROUT
SQUIRRELS CAN BE A REAL PROBLEM, AS THEY EAT YOUR BIRDSEED, RAID YOUR GARDEN, TEAR UP YOUR YARD AND DO MANY OTHER DESTRUCTIVE THINGS...
BUT THE INDUSTRIOUS RODENT IS BENEFICIAL IN THAT IT HELPS MANY PLANTS TO SURVIVE AND MULTIPLY BY SPREADING THEIR SEEDS OVER THE COUNTRYSIDE
THE SPREAD OF OAK TREES ON THE SLOPES OF HILLS AND MOUNTAINS MAY SEEM PUZZLING...
AS ACORNS ARE TOO BIG TO BE CARRIED BY THE WIND, SO SOME OAKS MUST DEPEND ON ANIMALS TO SPREAD THEIR FRUIT...
AND SQUIRRELS, ALONG WITH DEER, BIRDS, ETC., CERTAINLY DO THEIR SHARE IN REPLENISHING THE FOREST!
JACK ELROD



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• 5-Liner with picture	$55

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Classified Ads

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Saipan Tribune

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Baker's dozen

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WHATZIT?™

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.

baker baker baker
baker baker baker
baker baker baker
baker baker baker
baker

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joins Micronesia Summ
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235- NEWS

Bandaged Romo gets Dallas by Seattle

IRVING, Texas (AP)—The Dallas Cowboys are ready for December.

On the verge of collapse just a few weeks ago, Tony Romo, DeMarcus Ware and the Cowboys guaranteed they will be a team to watch in the final month by crushing the Seattle Seahawks 34-9 Thursday for their third straight victory.

Romo got it rolling with touchdowns on the first three drives and points on the first four, then the defense took care of the rest. They racked up seven sacks—three by Ware, giving him an NFL-best 15—and each was punctuated by a gobbling turkey version of the Chicken Dance, the kind of giddiness expected from a team playing the way Dallas (8-4) has been lately.

The Cowboys have wiped away the bitterness of a 2-4 rut and surged near the top of the NFC wild-card race. The turnaround began with Romo returning from a broken pinkie finger, albeit with a splint on his passing hand, and now he's expected to be back to full strength for the next game. Dallas also will get cornerback-punt returner Adam "Pacman" Jones back from a suspension.

Yet the Cowboys aren't getting too carried away with their good fortune. They realize they've padded their confidence with consecutive blowouts over bad teams and now they're going to play three straight tough foes: Pittsburgh, the New York Giants and Baltimore. Another stumbling block is their woeful recent history in Decembers—no winning records in the month since 2001.

"We had a rough patch and we're still not out of it," Romo said. "We've still got to go forward and keep putting together wins to get in the playoffs. Our confidence level is that on any given Sunday we can compete with the best of anybody. It'll be interesting to see how we do going forward."

About the only tense moments Thursday came in the third quarter, and they had nothing to do with the score.

AP

Dallas Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo, right, scrambles past Seattle Seahawks defensive end Lawrence Jackson for a first down during the first quarter NFL football game on Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, Nov. 27, 2008, in Irving, Texas.

It was Marion Barber going out with a dislocated right pinkie toe, then Ware limping off with an aching left knee. Ware felt good enough that no exams were immediately done, but will still have an X-ray and an MRI to make sure everything is OK.

"At this moment, I feel good about both of those players," team owner Jerry Jones said.

The Seahawks lost their fifth straight game and fell to 2-10. It matches the most losses outgoing coach Mike Holmgren has had in his 17 years in the NFL, and there are four games left.

Seattle was within a touchdown of winning its past three games, but this one was never close after former Dallas running back Julius Jones fumbled on the Seahawks' first possession. The Cowboys wound up driving for a touchdown that made it 14-0; it was 24-3 midway through the second quarter.

"Coach told us we had to be close to perfect to beat these guys," Seattle quarterback Matt Hasselbeck said. "We haven't played been close to playing like that all season. If they keep playing the way they are, they have a chance to win it all. There was a time when we were that talented bunch with no injuries. It hasn't been like that for us this season."

Hasselbeck was 22-of-38 for a season-high 287 yards. He threw one interception and endured the most sacks (seven) the Cowboys defense has collected since getting nine on Nov. 9, 1997.

Jones was held to 37 yards on 11 carries in his return to Texas Stadium. Dallas fans booed every time he got the ball.

"It's a term of endearment to me," Jones said. "It just means they respect you."

Romo started 12-of-14 for 198 yards and two touchdowns, with Barber scoring once in between. It was the first time all season the Cowboys scored touchdowns on three straight drives. And it was the first time they'd started a game that way since Oct. 9, 1994, according to Stats Inc.

Another indication of how easy it was: Dallas gained first downs on 17 of their first 23 plays.

"T.O. will tell you I'm playing at a ridiculously high level," Romo said, smirking.

Romo finished 22-of-33 for 331 yards and three touchdowns with an interception. Jason Witten was a big part of the offense for the first time since breaking a rib, catching nine passes for 115 yards (both season highs) and a touchdown.

Terrell Owens had five catches for 98 yards and a touchdown. He blew his chance for a second straight 100-yard game by dropping a wide-open slant in the fourth quarter.

"Obviously, this helps out a lot but I think somebody in the locker room said last week, if the season ended today, we're still left out (of the playoffs)," Witten said. "You've got to have that mentality and understand the challenges that are ahead. It's still going to be even tougher as December rolls around."

Eagles 48, Cardinals 20

At Philadelphia, Donovan McNabb threw four touchdown passes, Brian Westbrook tied a team-record with four scores and Philadelphia beat Arizona.

Just four days ago, McNabb was benched for the first time in his career at halftime of a 36-7 loss at Baltimore. But coach Andy Reid gave McNabb another chance and the five-time Pro Bowl quarterback responded with his best game since Week 1.

McNabb completed 27 of 39 passes for 260 yards and a passer rating of 121.7. Westbrook had 110 yards rushing and 20 more receiving. He had two TDs on the ground and two receiving.

The Eagles (6-5-1) desperately needed to win to maintain their slim playoff hopes. They'll have a few extra days to prepare for the New York Giants (10-1) on Dec. 7.

The Cardinals (7-5) will clinch their first division title in 33 years if San Francisco loses at Buffalo on Sunday. Kurt Warner had 235 yards passing, three TDs and three interceptions.

Titans 47, Lions 10

At Detroit, Chris Johnson was untouched on a short run to the outside and a long gain up the middle.

The two plays were symbolic of the canyon-like gap between the once-beaten Tennessee Titans and the winless Detroit Lions.

Johnson ran for two touchdowns in the first quarter, LenDale White scored twice in the second and Tennessee coasted.

Johnson finished with 125 yards rushing and White added 106 on the ground as Tennessee met its goal of re-establishing the running game.

The Titans (11-1) bounced back from their first defeat of the season, surging to a 28-3 lead in the opening minute of the second, and have their best 12-game record in the club's history.

The Lions (0-12) moved a step closer to becoming the NFL's first 0-16 team, losing by a franchise-worst 37 points and giving up a franchise-record 47 points in their 69th game on Thanksgiving.

Redskins, Jaguars upgrade security after shootings

By MARK LONG
AP SPORTS WRITER

Washington Redskins tight end Chris Cooley used to go to work with his house unlocked, his garage door open and his mind at ease.

Living in a distant suburb of Washington, D.C., Cooley never worried about break-ins or robberies. He had even less concern about getting beaten, shot, stabbed or killed.

That was before the death of teammate Sean Taylor, who died a year ago Thursday, a day after being shot at his South Florida home during a robbery. Cooley has made substantial changes to his security habits since, and he's hardly alone. Taylor's death and the late-night attack on Jacksonville Jaguars offensive lineman Richard Collier this year have forced the Redskins, Jaguars and many of their colleagues to adjust their lifestyles—minor deviations for some, radical transformations for others.

"Probably both of them could have been prevented by simple security measures," Cooley said. "That's sad to say, but it's the truth."

Guard dogs, alarms, cameras, motion sensors and firearms, some of these guys have it all. They double-check windows and doors daily, keep close tabs on who's coming to their homes and try to avoid dangerous situations—even if it means a boring evening at home instead of a night on the town.

"Those shootings have thrown my antennas way up and shown me that even when you think you're safe you're not safe," said Jaguars safety Pierson Prioleau, a teammate of Taylor's last season.

Although Prioleau upgraded his home security ("If ADT has it to offer, I got it," he says) his most important change has been in awareness.

"I am more cautious, more aware of my surroundings," he said. "I am more careful of the people I invite in my home, the people I surround myself with when I go out. I had a security system before and I had guns before. Now, I'm just more alert."

Prioleau checks around his car before he unlocks the doors, keeps an eye on his rearview mirror to make sure no one is following him and tries to never stop in a poorly lit area.

Teammate Dennis Northcutt takes similar precautions, but he believes that if someone decides to attack him and plans it right, there's nothing he can do to prevent it.

"Some things you just can't prepare for," Northcutt said. "You can get security. You can have the biggest gun, the biggest knife, the best whatever you want, but sometimes that just doesn't even matter. If you get caught in the right moment, the right situation and they plan right for you, then it's your time. It's unfortunate and it's hard, but it's the truth."

Taylor, a Pro Bowl safety, was sleeping at his home in an affluent Miami suburb, along with his longtime girlfriend and the couple's 18-month-old daughter, when they were awakened by loud noises. Taylor grabbed a machete he kept nearby for protection, but it did him no good when the intruder broke down the bedroom door and fired two shots, one striking Taylor in the leg and ripping through a vital artery. Taylor died a little over 24 hours later. He had failed to turn his security system on even though his home was burglarized a week earlier.

Collier was shot in early September while waiting for two women outside an apartment complex. He sustained 14 gunshot wounds and had to have his left leg amputated because of blood clots. Police said the man charged with shooting Collier wanted revenge after they fought outside a nightclub in April.

There are plenty of other examples of violence against athletes, too:

■ Broncos cornerback Darrent Williams was shot and killed outside a Denver nightclub while riding in his limousine in 2007.

■ Oakland receiver Javon Walker was robbed and beaten unconscious in Las Vegas in June.

■ Houston cornerback Dunta Robinson was tied up in September 2007 while two men broke into his home and stole jewelry.

■ NBA players Antoine Walker and Eddy Curry were robbed just weeks apart in their Chicago-area homes in 2007.

While the NFL provides security consultants and teams have their own security chiefs, it's really up to the players to change.

And most have.

Jaguars running back Fred Taylor considered getting a guard dog, but since his wife doesn't like dogs, he purchased an AR-15 military rifle instead.

Redskins running back Rock Cartwright and linebacker Khary Campbell also bought guns.

"I keep it in my house at all times," Cartwright said. "I keep it loaded. I keep it in a secret spot—only I know where it is—in case something was to go down. You've got to protect yourself at all costs."

Teammate Chris Samuels took a different route, getting two trained security dogs, lights all around his home and motion sensors for spots near the wooded areas.

"We're targets whether we like it or not," he said. "I am taking extra steps. I've got people watching the house and stuff like that when I'm gone."

There are some who haven't changed a thing since the shootings, calling them isolated incidents and random acts of violence, and pointing to the odds being in their favor that this kind of tragedy won't happen to them.

But many, especially the Redskins and Jaguars, aren't willing to take that chance. That's why Cooley now locks his place down when he leaves for work.

Posey's big 3 lifts Hornets past Nuggets

DENVER (AP)—James Posey made a 3-pointer with 19.1 seconds left Thursday night to lift the New Orleans Hornets to their fourth straight victory, 105-101 over the Denver Nuggets, one of his former teams.

Chris Paul led the Hornets with 22 points and 10 assists but came up six rebounds short of recording his third straight triple-double.

Still, he took the game over late, scoring seven straight points for his team, including a 3-pointer to tie the game at 92 with 2:07 left. A bit later, the Hornets took a four-point lead on Peja Stojakovic's 3 and a subsequent free throw after Kenyon Martin got a technical.

The Nuggets, led by J.R. Smith with 32 points, tied it at 98 with 37 seconds left, but the Hornets worked the ball to Posey, who made the 3 to give them the lead for good.

Chauncey Billups missed his own 3 on the next possession and the Hornets made four free throws down the stretch to ice the win. Denver fell to 9-3 since Billups arrived. He struggled in this one, finishing with only 12 points and never taking over the game.

Carmelo Anthony had 24 points on 8-for-13 shooting for Denver, showing more signs of coming out of a slump that had him making only 39 percent of his shots coming into the game. Smith's season high came a night after George Karl benched him for being late to practice earlier in the week. He made a 3-pointer and had a steal and dunk to give the Nuggets the lead midway through the fourth quarter after they had trailed by as many as 14.

It looked like it would be his night, but instead it belonged to Paul, who dominated the fourth quarter, scoring 13 points, including the late streak that tied the game at 92.

The Hornets played without Mo Peterson (back) and Tyson Chandler, whose wife gave birth Tuesday. They had something of an advantage, though, having arrived in Denver for this Thanksgiving night game well before the Nuggets, who toughed out a 1-point win at the Clippers on Wednesday. New Orleans hadn't played since Monday.

Rasual Butler made his first seven shots for New Orleans and finished with 19 points. Stojakovic had 17 and David West had 15, including a stick back of Paul's near air ball that gave the Hornets a 98-94 lead with 52 seconds left.

Magic 105, Wizard 90

At Washington, Dwight Howard had 26 points, 14 rebounds and three blocks, and Hedo Turkoglu added 20 points and a season-high 10 rebounds to help the Orlando Magic beat the Washington Wizards.

Orlando has won eight of its last nine games and six in a row on the road.

Caron Butler scored 19 of his 25 points in the first half for Washington, and Antawn Jamison had 17 points and 12 rebounds.

Howard had 14 points and nine rebounds in the first 8:45 JaVale McGee started at center for Washington, and he picked up two fouls in 2:16. Andray Blatche was the next to try to stop Howard, and he had two fouls in 1:47. By then, Howard had seven points.

Etan Thomas was the third to guard Howard, who scored seven more points as the Magic went on an 11-0 run to take a 25-11 lead. Howard went to the bench moments later, and Washington, which has dropped 11 of its 13 games this season, went on a 19-3 run to cut it to 38-34 early in the second quarter.

Orlando had just three points in the first 6:57 of the second quarter after scoring 38 points in the first quarter - the most allowed by Washington this season.

The Wizards played their second game under interim coach Ed Tapscott after beating Golden State by 24 points in the first. Tapscott, who replaced Eddie Jordan on Monday, said he'd had time to add a few of his own innovations to the offense. He suggested that Butler and Jamison would play on the same side of the court more often, and also warned that there probably wouldn't be a repeat of Tuesday night's romp.

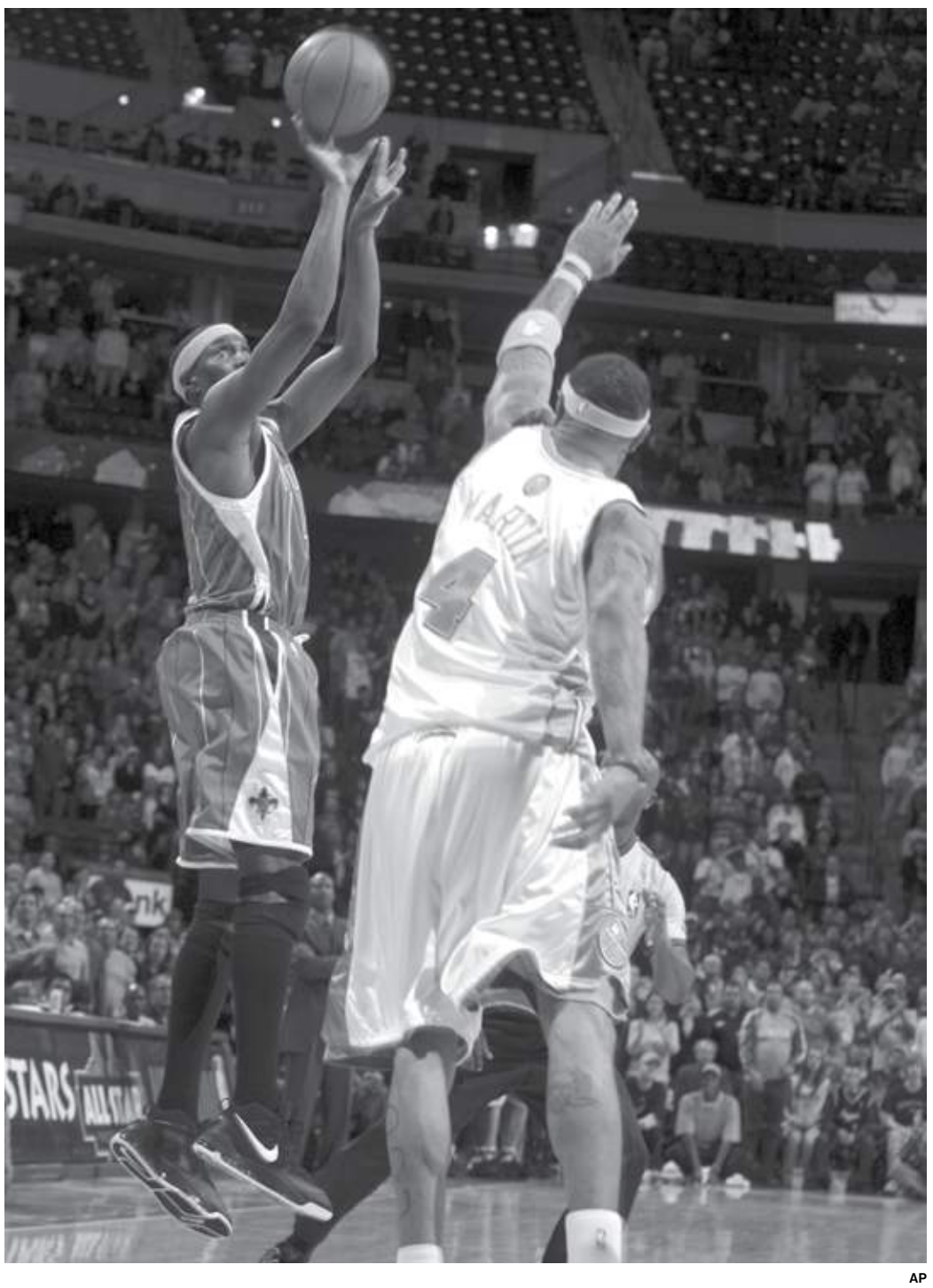
"That was a one-of-a-kind game," Tapscott said.

After McGee hit a layup to start the quarter to cut Orlando's lead to nine at 55-46, the Magic went on a 16-3 tear to make it 71-49 lead with 6:57 to play.

Rashard Lewis, who gave Orlando a victory Wednesday night in Philadelphia with a late 3-pointer, added 17 points, and Mickael Peitrus also had 17. Anthony Johnson had a season-high 12 assists.

While the Magic had a comfortable Thanksgiving, their coach did not. Stan Van Gundy said that he was feeling sick, and didn't join the team for its pregame holiday meal.

"I did the stuff to get ready for the game, took a nap. Happy Thanksgiving," Van Gundy said.



AP

New Orleans Hornets forward James Posey, left, shoots a three-point basket over Denver Nuggets forward Kenyon Martin to put the Hornets ahead with 19 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter of the Hornets' 105-101 victory in an NBA basketball game in Denver on Thursday, Nov. 27, 2008.

Pistons punish Iverson after missing practice

DETROIT (AP)—Allen Iverson apparently chose family and food over practice—and he'll be fined for it.

Iverson was the only player who didn't show up when the Detroit Pistons worked out on Thanksgiving.

Coach Michael Curry confirmed Iverson will be fined, will not start Friday night against the Milwaukee Bucks and might not play in the game for missing the practice.

After Detroit traded for the superstar, Iverson insisted he would do whatever Curry wanted him to and even mocked his famous rant about practice while playing for the Philadelphia 76ers.

The Pistons are 5-5 since acquiring Iverson from Denver for Chauncey Billups, Antonio McDyess and Cheikh Samb. McDyess and the Nuggets reached a buyout agreement and the power forward's agent said he will re-sign next month in Detroit.

Marion returns to Phoenix, where Shaq awaits Heat

MIAMI (AP)—Shawn Marion was a fan favorite in Phoenix for many years, a stalwart of the run-and-gun Suns teams that were perennial playoff contenders.

But his return to Phoenix will be overshadowed by a 7-foot-1 guy who, well, overshadows just about everything.

When Marion and the Miami Heat visit the Suns on Friday night, it'll be the first time Shaquille O'Neal sees the Heat since the trade that brought closure to a rapidly decaying relationship toward the end of last season. O'Neal says it's just another game, but even some of his current teammates aren't buying that story.

So get ready for Shaq-Miami I.

"The type of person Shaq is and the pride he has, I'm sure he didn't feel like he was getting the benefit of the doubt down there at the end of the day," Suns guard Raja Bell said. "He has something to prove to the league and Miami. So I wouldn't expect much less than Shaq coming out early and dominating."

Odds are, Suns fans will be thrilled to see Marion.

Most Heat players, though, seem ambivalent to seeing Shaq again.

He doesn't keep in regular contact with most players on Miami's roster—in fairness, he played with only a handful of them—and Dwyane Wade and Udonis Haslem are the only Heat starters remaining from the 2006 NBA title team, the highlight of Shaq's 3 1/2 seasons in South Florida.

And even Shaq acknowledges that he doesn't speak with Wade anymore.

"I've been watching Shaq since I was 5 years old, since he was breaking backboards in Orlando," Heat rookie Michael Beasley said. "It's special. It's like meeting Michael Jordan, almost. I guess it's something. I think there's going to be animosity, good competitiveness. I think it's going to be a real good game. I just hope I don't have to take a charge against him."

No, that duty will likely go to Haslem, the league's smallest starting center, who's only half a foot and 100 pounds smaller than O'Neal.

Still, somehow, Haslem is maybe the happiest Heat player to see O'Neal.

"I'm just looking forward to seeing him, period, not just the challenge," Haslem said. "We had a good run together. There's much love there between me and him. But other than that, I'm approaching it like any other game. Nothing special about it."

If past stats are any indication, O'Neal could be primed for a big night. In his first games against the Orlando Magic and Los Angeles Lakers after leaving those two franchises, he averaged 24.5 points and 14.5 rebounds.

His breakups there were filled with rancor: O'Neal had some particularly sharp words for former star teammate Penny Hardaway with the Magic after departing central Florida, and by now, everyone who follows the NBA is acutely aware of the neverending saga starring Shaq, Kobe Bryant and Phil Jackson in O'Neal's post-Lakers era.

But for whatever reason, O'Neal's departure from Miami hasn't brought the same verbal venom. Sure, there were a few Shaq cracks—calling Wade "wonderboy," laying some of the blame for his 2007-08 struggles on Ricky Davis and Chris Quinn (who said he wasn't bothered), and blaming the Heat medical staff for his constant ailments—but as far as NBA divorces go, it's been relatively tame.

"Just a regular game. There's no hard feelings," O'Neal said Wednesday night in Minnesota. "They can get hot. We know they have a lot of shooters and we know how they play, but it's just another game. ... I feel good about it. Good people. Business is business. I've been a businessman since '92 and I don't take anything personal. It's cool. I'm good. Everything's good."

Marion feels the same way.

O'Neal largely forced Miami's hand into making a trade last year, even asking for a buyout of the remaining 2 1/2 years of his $20-million-a-season deal. But Marion was quite content in Phoenix, which fancied itself as a championship contender.

"I love the fans in Phoenix. I had a great 8 1/2 years there," Marion said. "I was sad to go. I think it was sad for me to go. But it is what it is. It's a business, we'll go there and we'll try to get a win."

Marion averaged 18.4 points in 660 games with the Suns, was part of six playoff appearances and went to four All-Star games wearing Phoenix colors.

"He's had one of the greatest Suns careers of all time," Phoenix guard Steve Nash said. "I'd imagine he's going to have a great ovation. If he doesn't, I'll be extremely disappointed."

Chances are, Marion will be received a bit better in this game than when O'Neal returns to Miami in March.

"Boo me," O'Neal said. "You can't hurt my feelings because my feelings don't get hurt. Because I don't have any feelings. I'm a martian."

Daniel regains Genesis Cup lead

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Daniel is back on top of the 2008 CIM-FCC Inter-Color Basketball League-3rd Genesis Cup after slipping past Ezekiel, 96-90, last week at the CIM-FCC Basketball Court in Gualo Rai.

A depleted crew gave Daniel its fifth win in six games putting the team ahead by a win against second place Isaiah (4-1).

Actually, both teams played with limited manpower, as Daniel and Ezekiel had only six players each. But Daniel survived the game between teams with depleted rosters, as all of its six players scored in double figures with George Barbo leading the way with 26 points.

Barbo drilled in 16 of his total production in the second half to foil Ezekiel's repeated comeback bids.

Daniel led in the first half, 47-40, but the second half was a seesaw battle, as Ferdinand Galvan tried to make things happen for Ezekiel.

Galvan exploded for 20 points in the second half and finished with 35, but still fell short of giving Ezekiel its first win in six games.

Helping Barbo bring Daniel back to the No. 1 spot were Elmer Esdrelon, who fired 21 points, and Brendon Talania and Greg De Leon, who chipped in 15 apiece. Ricky Dela Paz and Noel Puno also finished in double figures with 11 markers each.

Dela Paz made all his points in the second half, as he and Esdrelon supported Barbo on offense, drilling timely baskets that foiled Ezekiel's bid for the first win of the season.

Meanwhile, next week will be the final round of the three-round regular season of the league.

Last night's match between Isaiah and defending champion Jeremiah was the last game in the second round.

After the three-round robin regular season, the top two teams will square off for the title, while the last two will duel for the third place trophy.

Daniel 96 – G. Barbo 26, Esdrelon 21, Talania 15, De Leon 15, Puno 11, Dela Paz 11.

Ezekiel 90 – Galvan 35, Perez 18, Rago 10, Villanueva 9, Valencia 8, Evangelista 6.

Scoring by halves: 47-40, 96-90.

OPEN

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championship run, Villanueva didn't bat an eyelash and said that Talibong was a force for them this past season.

Last but certainly not the least, the Voyagers captain also thanked PTI and their home bar, Jonny's Bar, for sponsoring the team's entry this season.

Hustlers, meanwhile, finished in unfamiliar territory by coming in second to Voyagers despite also sweeping Coral Reef Shark Attack (14-46) in its final game Tuesday night.

The only other game in the Agingan Division saw Godfather's Rock Steady (19-41) score a 3-1 win over Island Rent A Car (34-26).

In the Obyan Division, Primo's Home Boys took home the championship despite losing to D'Pirates Huwa, 1-3, last Tuesday.

Home Boys wound up with a 40-21 slate, only half a game ahead of Perfect Spotters which finished 39-21 following its 4-0 win over VFW Warriors.

Huwa and Warriors bowed out with 29-31 and 18-42 win-loss records, respectively.

USSP Fotten Palau (33-27) and Coral Reef Barracuda (21-39) settled for a tie in their own match-up Tuesday.

Pacific Amusement, the same company that runs the leagues of the Saipan Electronic Darts Association, organizes the SBA-Budweiser Open 8-Ball League.

For more information about the Budweiser SBA Open 8-Ball League and SEDA, contact Charlotte Tenepere at 233-4397.

THE CRANK

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have Marianas Elite's Myron "The Natural" San Nicolas going up against Team Predators' "Brutal" Bryson Sablan in the semi main event.

The rest of the fight card for Trench Warz IX: The Annihilation is as follows:

■ Team Pwang's Eddie Paulis vs. Trench Tech's Shane "Pikaboo" Alvarez (4-0) in the 130-lb. division;

■ Team Pwang's J.J. "The Mauler" Mality (1-3) vs. Trench Tech's Alverick "Pretty Boy" Alvarez (2-0) in the 140-lb. division;

■ Marianas Elite's Derick "Pinchi" Rangamar (3-3) vs. Trench Tech's "Badd" Brad Palacios (5-2) in the 140-lb. division;

■ Predator Combat's Nate "The Terrible" Guam United Fight Team's Leo "The Assassin" Cing (5-4) in the 150-lb. division;

■ D.A.T. Gym's Joe Cabrera (0-1) vs. Trench Tech's Fasi "Quikdraw" Jesse (2-0) in the 155-lb. division;

■ Malesso Home Grown Fighters' Brian "The Shotgun" Howard (6-5) vs. Trench Tech's Giovanni "Palaxi" Sablan (12-4) in the 150-lb. division;

■ Predator Combat's John "The Jackhammer" Borja (2-3) vs. Marianas Elite's Syl "The Deal" Teregeyo (3-2-1) in the 185-lb. division;

■ Team SSS Robert "Pitbull" Palacios (0-5) vs. Trench Tech's Jason "Rush" Tarkong (8-2) in the 175-lb. division; and

■ Team Zalaka's Ton "Xcalibur" Nekaifes (0-1) vs. Team X-Treme's "Kill" Bill Saures (6-4) in the Big Brawl super heavyweight division.

Trench Warz IX: The Annihilation will also make history with the first ever female MMA fight in the CNMI as Jen "Salbahe" Sambile makes her debut against boxer-turned-MMA fighter Tara "Tarantula" Namauleg.

Tickets for Trench Warz IX: The Annihilation are on sale at Boarderline, 6-7-Zero Rocksteady Shop, Hannam Market, Mobil Kagman, and Trench Tech Gym. General admission costs $25, while VIP is $40. Gates open at 6pm.

WIZARDS

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small degree, is that Grunfeld replaced one stylish, well-schooled, basketball sophisticate from Northeast Washington with another. Ed Tapscott, now the interim coach, is one of the most diversely skilled, uniquely qualified men in professional basketball. He's been a college head coach, represented players, been assistant general manager, worked in broadcasting, consulted, scouted. He did 99 percent of the heavy lifting that resulted in a franchise in Charlotte for billionaire Bob Johnson. Tapscott's resume glitters.

Of course, the new coach has some ideas about how this group of players, still missing Arenas and Haywood, can be better than 1-10.

After putting the Wizards through a particularly difficult practice Monday, Tapscott talked pointedly about this team playing better defense, specifically about closing down the lane, protecting the rim and closing out on three-point shooters—all things the Wizards have failed miserably at doing, which is why they're the worst team in the NBA defensively. Tapscott said he wants to refine what the Wizards do well (run Jordan's offense) and do all the other things at a higher level. He's going to demand they give more than they think they can. He wants the team to be more physical and he wants to narrow the rotation to eight, maybe nine players, the better to motivate those outside the rotation to practice hard enough to earn playing time.

Sounds good. But can they? Are these Wizards skilled and tough enough to do what Tapscott wants? To be more physical, to shut down the lane, to protect the rim, to close out on three-point shooters? In other words, to play NBA-level defense? Grunfeld and Tapscott believe they are good enough, that no matter the injuries they shouldn't under any circumstance have a worse record than Oklahoma City, which looks like one of the worst teams ever. "We're not that far away," Tapscott said, referring to several lost fourth quarter leads built on just the kind of play he wants to see more consistently.

There are players around the league who beg to differ. Two current all-stars who have played against the Wizards this season told me that these Wizards are dreadful, not improved one lick over the summer through personnel moves. "They're the same team they were two years ago in the playoffs where they're trying to figure out what to do without Gilbert," one of the all-stars said. "That was pretty good then, but just about every team in the East is better than they were two years ago and last year ... except the Wizards."

There's no arguing that. Atlanta, Philly, the Knicks, Miami, Toronto, Milwaukee — they all got better over the summer. The Wizards gave Arenas $111 million and he hasn't played one second, and we don't know when he will or what he'll look like when he does. Every time the Wizards lose a game it looks like keeping Arenas, especially at that price, was an enormous mistake. Grunfeld made a very nice draft pick in JaVale McGee, but the kid needs a couple of years to become a consistent impact player.

Other than McGee, the Wizards sat at the table with pretty much the same hand, minus reserve ace Roger Mason, who is playing very well for San Antonio. How long can the same group hold the fort while waiting for reinforcements? That's not Jordan's fault, it's Grunfeld's. The GM acknowledged that when he said, "We're all responsible ... myself, the players, the coaches." GMs, of course, don't fire themselves. They're the boss. Grunfeld was frank when he said, "This is an area we can control."

To what degree, we'll find out fairly quickly. Grunfeld called the 1-10 record "unacceptable." Okay, the Wizards shouldn't be 1-10. They certainly shouldn't have lost to the Knicks, who were down to seven players Saturday night. That loss had to seal Jordan's fate. But what should the Wizards be right now? 3-7? Perhaps 4-6? Is it possible, as opposing players have suggested, that this team simply isn't any good?

I probably should admit here that I'm rooting for Tapscott, who I've been close friends with for 20 years, to find some way to trigger a turnaround. What keeps me from thinking "Same old Bullets" right about now is that Grunfeld has a track record of being right about these things, and Tapscott can diagnose what ails a team as well as anyone. In tandem, they set up the Knicks to reach the NBA Finals twice. They were setting the table in Milwaukee before ownership got meddlesome.

Jordan is unemployed now, though surely not for long, because Grunfeld's instincts tell him the Wizards ought to be better than their record and because he believes Tapscott can get out of them something Jordan couldn't. Few people can communicate the game's strategies and its nuances, to insiders or outsiders, as well as Ed Tapscott. Whether the coach, new or old, can get the players to do what he knows is necessary is always at the core of the season.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	14	2	.875	–
New Jersey	7	7	.500	6
Toronto	7	7	.500	6
New York	7	8	.467	6 1/2
Philadelphia	7	8	.467	6 1/2

Southeast Division

Orlando	12	4	.750	–
Atlanta	9	5	.643	2
Miami	7	8	.467	4 1/2
Charlotte	4	10	.286	7
Washington	2	11	.154	8 1/2

Central Division

Cleveland	12	3	.800	–
Detroit	9	5	.643	2 1/2
Chicago	7	9	.438	5 1/2
Indiana	6	8	.429	5 1/2
Milwaukee	7	10	.412	6

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

New Orleans	9	5	.643	–
Houston	10	6	.625	1/2
San Antonio	8	6	.571	1
Dallas	7	7	.500	2
Memphis	4	11	.267	5 1/2

Northwest Division

Denver	10	6	.625	–
Portland	10	6	.625	–
Utah	10	6	.625	–
Minnesota	3	10	.231	5 1/2
Oklahoma City	1	15	.063	9

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	12	1	.923	–
Phoenix	11	5	.688	2 1/2
Golden State	5	10	.333	8
Sacramento	5	12	.294	9
L.A. Clippers	2	13	.133	11

Yesterday's Games

Orlando 105, Washington 90
New Orleans 105, Denver 101

NBA LEADERS

Scoring

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
James, Clev.	14	138	114	404	28.9
Wade, Mia.	14	139	110	399	28.5
Bosh, Tor.	13	120	105	347	26.7
Nowitzki, Dall.	14	120	91	345	24.6
Johnson, Atl.	13	110	59	312	24.0
Granger, Ind.	12	95	65	285	23.8
Bryant, LAL	13	114	69	308	23.7
Carter, N.J.	13	109	63	305	23.5
Harris, N.J.	10	64	96	230	23.0
Stoudemire, Phoe.	15	117	104	339	22.6
Durant, OKC.	14	119	64	313	22.4
Jefferson, Minn.	12	114	40	268	22.3
Duncan, S.A.	13	116	51	283	21.8
Roy, Port.	15	113	82	325	21.7
Jackson, G.S.	14	102	72	301	21.5
Butler, Wash.	12	92	61	257	21.4
West, N.O.	13	106	58	272	20.9
Howard, Orl.	14	102	88	292	20.9
Jamison, Wash.	12	91	53	248	20.7
Mayo, Mem.	14	106	49	289	20.6

FG Percentage

	FG	FGA	PCT
Nene, Den.	84	132	.636
O'Neal, Phoe.	77	130	.592
Howard, Orl.	102	175	.583
Gasol, Mem.	60	104	.577
Stoudemire, Phoe.	117	204	.574
Diaw, Phoe.	61	107	.570
Kaman, LAC	86	151	.570
Haslem, Mia.	69	122	.566
Boozer, Utah	99	177	.559
Biedrins, G.S.	92	165	.558

Rebounds

	G	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Howard, Orl.	14	67	121	188	13.4
Biedrins, G.S.	14	71	114	185	13.2
Randolph, LAC	11	40	97	137	12.5
Bogut, Mil.	16	55	120	175	10.9
Murphy, Ind.	12	17	109	126	10.5
Bosh, Tor.	13	38	98	136	10.5
Brand, Phil.	14	41	104	145	10.4
Okafor, Char.	13	49	83	132	10.2
Duncan, S.A.	13	39	92	131	10.1
Dalembert, Phil.	14	49	91	140	10.0
Kaman, LAC	14	45	95	140	10.0

Assists

	G	AST	AVG
Paul, N.O.	13	158	12.2
Calderon, Tor.	11	103	9.4
Kidd, Dall.	14	118	8.4
Nash, Phoe.	14	114	8.1
B. Davis, LAC	13	104	8.0
Wade, Mia.	14	106	7.6
Duhon, N.Y.	14	100	7.1
Jackson, G.S.	14	93	6.6
Billups, Den.	12	79	6.6
James, Clev.	14	92	6.6

NFL STANDINGS

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
N.Y. Jets	8	3	0	.727	323	234
New England	7	4	0	.636	267	222
Miami	6	5	0	.545	237	245
Buffalo	6	5	0	.545	273	249
South						
Tennessee	11	1	0	.917	304	175
Indianapolis	7	4	0	.636	247	244
Jacksonville	4	7	0	.364	224	240
Houston	4	7	0	.364	252	293
North						
Pittsburgh	8	3	0	.727	236	160
Baltimore	7	4	0	.636	258	187
Cleveland	4	7	0	.364	207	237
Cincinnati	1	9	1	.136	148	276
West						
Denver	6	5	0	.545	258	302
San Diego	4	7	0	.364	274	252
Oakland	3	8	0	.273	159	245
Kansas City	1	10	0	.091	196	327

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
N.Y. Giants	10	1	0	.909	329	199
Dallas	8	4	0	.667	299	260
Washington	7	4	0	.636	201	199
Philadelphia	6	5	1	.542	319	249
South						
Tampa Bay	8	3	0	.727	257	180
Carolina	8	3	0	.727	250	200
Atlanta	7	4	0	.636	276	226
New Orleans	6	5	0	.545	317	278
North						
Chicago	6	5	0	.545	267	234
Minnesota	6	5	0	.545	253	246
Green Bay	5	6	0	.455	303	260
Detroit	0	12	0	.000	203	393
West						
Arizona	7	5	0	.583	338	313
San Francisco	3	8	0	.273	252	310
St. Louis	2	9	0	.182	147	344
Seattle	2	10	0	.167	216	311

Yesterday's Games

Tennessee 47, Detroit 10
Dallas 34, Seattle 9
Philadelphia 48, Arizona 20

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOCAL SCORES

GENESIS CUP STANDINGS

Daniel	5	1
Isaiah	4	1
Jeremiah	2	3
Ezekiel	0	6

Posey's big 3 lifts Hornets past Nuggets

James Posey made a 3-pointer with 19.1 seconds left Thursday night to lift the New Orleans Hornets to their fourth straight victory, 105-101 over the Denver Nuggets, one of his former teams.

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Bandaged Romo gets Dallas by Seattle

The Dallas Cowboys are ready for December. On the verge of collapse just a few weeks ago, Tony Romo, DeMarcus Ware and the Cowboys guaranteed they will be a team to watch in the final month.

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Open 8-ball victory for Voyagers

MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

PTI Voyagers won all four games against USSP Wat-Ever en route to winning the Agingan Division of the Saipan Billiards Association's Budweiser Open 8-Ball League Tuesday night at the USS Peleliu Club in Garapan.

It was the first ever team championship for Voyagers after their closest pursuer SaipanCell Hustlers dominated the league the past two competitions.

In a season that saw the Voyagers and Hustlers alternate the top spot in the Agingan Division, the latter put the finishing touches in their title run by sweeping Wat-Ever in their own turf.

R.J. Mascarinas was the first to put Voyagers on the board when he beat Ed Manucdoc. Jean Cadag then defeated Nolas Kapileo to make it 2-0 before Jojo Talibong gave the team an unassailable lead of 3-0 after he downed Ace Elameto.

Captain Rolly Villanueva and Ryan Odicta then completed the sweep after taking down Norman Tenorio and Simon Kapileo in the final two games.

The 4-0 win gave Voyagers a 48-12 win-loss record at season's end, two games ahead of Hustlers (46-14). The loss left Wat-Ever with a 19-41 mark.

Villanueva said the victory was sweet after they finished runner-up to Hustlers the past couple of seasons. For the record, Voyagers won two of three games against their archrivals this season.

He added that total team effort and cooperation were keys for their season-long brilliance. Villanueva also said key additions Cadag and Amor Zapanta also gave the team a new dimension.

Asked who did most of the heavy lifting during their

See OPEN on Page 27

MARK RABAGO

Members of the PTI Voyagers team pose during a break in their game against USSP Wat-Ever in the Saipan Billiards Association's Budweiser Open 8-Ball League Tuesday night at the USS Peleliu Club in Garapan.

'The Crank' set to referee main event

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

Frank "The Crank" Camacho will be the third man inside the octagon in Trench Warz IX: The Annihilation's main event between Kelvin "The Big Hit" Fitial and Rueben "The Booben" Quinata.

Trench Tech president Cuki Alvarez said the former Universal Reality Combat Championships light heavyweight champion is returning to Saipan fresh from winning a gold medal in the No Gi competition of a North American Grappling Association tournament in New Jersey.

"Frank will be returning to Saipan for Trench Warz IX: The Annihilation set for Dec. 12. He will be in attendance on fight night as a special guest referee for some of the undercard fights and for the main event fight. Frank recently competed in the 170-179 lbs. intermediate division and won gold in No Gi and a bronze in Gi," he said.

Alvarez said the other referee for Trench Warz IX: The Annihilation will be James Revila, who has officiated a couple of Trench Tech's events in the past.

While Camacho and Revila will have the unenviable task of trying to separate MMA fighters inside the ring, Alvarez said the job of judging the matches will fall on the capable hands of three gentlemen— Dave Celis Sr., John Blanco, and L.J. Castro.

Alvarez said Celis is a boxing annalist and former Saipan Boxing Federation board member, while Blanco is a known MMA activist and consultant. Castro, meanwhile, is a famous local radio personality and DJ and is an MMA superfan.

Aside from the Saipan-Guam main event featuring Marianas Elite's Fitial and Spike 22 Fight Academy's Quinata, Trench Warz IX: The Annihilation will

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Frank "The Crank" Camacho, second right, poses with teammates in the recently held NAGA (North American Grappling Association) grappling tournament in New Jersey.

By MICHAEL WILBON
(c) 2008, The Washington Post

Wizards have problems beyond who's coaching

Even with Gilbert Arenas and Brendan Haywood on the shelf with injuries, Ernie Grunfeld felt the Washington Wizards should be playing better. Increasingly, he saw a group that still includes two all-stars playing selfishly and without confidence. He felt they had regressed defensively. Grunfeld, who manages largely by intuition, said more than once Monday, "Things just weren't right."

So he fired Eddie Jordan, the best coach the Wizards have had since Dick Motta.

Usually when a team starts 1-10 and is dead last in the league, the firing of a coach is a welcome move, perhaps even mandatory. Not here.

Eddie Jordan is the local boy who made good. He's a Washingtonian, smart and classy, exactly the man you want fronting your outfit. And on top of all of it, he breathed life into a stone-cold loser, a team so bad for so long it appeared cursed. No, Jordan didn't lead the Wizards to a championship. But he coached an exciting brand of basketball. Gilbert Arenas, Antawn Jamison and Caron Butler thrived in his system.

The only thing that might smooth over Jordan's firing, to some

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